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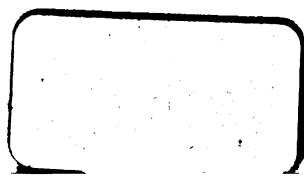
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CKLAND



OF THE
SHASTA
BOYS
TEAM

HUGH S. FULLERTON



NAS
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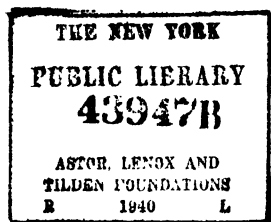
JIMMY KIRKLAND

**OF THE
SHASTA BOYS' TEAM**

**BY
HUGH S. FULLERTON**

**ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES PAXSON GRAY**

**PHILADELPHIA
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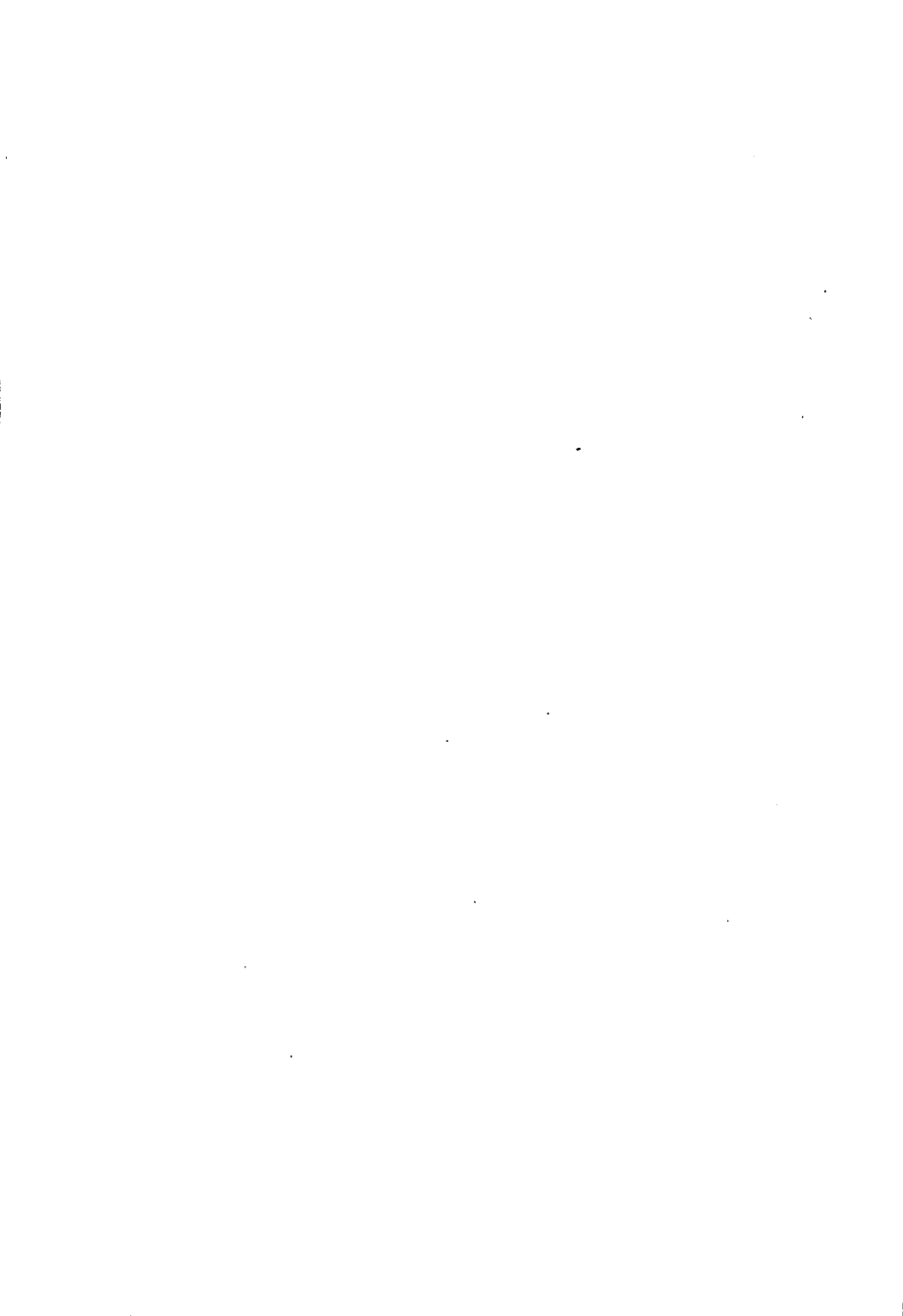
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To

FRANK LEROY CHANCE

"Peerless Leader" who, by example and teaching, has upheld the spirit of sportsmanship in professional baseball; this volume, in part reminiscent of his own early life, is inscribed.

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JIMMY KIRKLAND OF THE SHASTA BOYS' TEAM

CHAPTER I

Jimmy Kirkland

THE Overland, twenty hours late, freed from the railroad blockade that had held it at Ogden, Utah, was slowly winding its way toward the Northwest. On the far horizon the purple-black mountains fenced the level of the desert, now covered with pools of water that gathered until they trickled into rivulets that united into muddy torrents. A Chinook, or warm wind, had blown for two days, and had melted the billows of blizzard-heaped snow as if by magic. The black line far up the slopes of the nearer mountains showed King Winter in full retreat toward his moun-

tain fastnesses before this sudden charge of Spring.

The Chinook that had transformed the great desert from a glaring waste of white to a sea of mud had caused a flood that had swept away bridges, turned streams, usually mere trickles, into raging rivers, and the small rivers into torrents that rushed downward to the upper Columbia, the Humbolt, the Snake, the Wood and the Hood rivers. Such a flood the desert seldom had seen. Train service on the great transcontinental lines had been disorganized, then demoralized, then suspended, while reports of damage, of washed-out tracks and bridges held thousands of passengers of the majestic Overland trains marooned at Salt Lake, at Ogden and at Denver, while armies of engineers and sappers rushed forward to open the lines that East and West might be connected again.

The Overland, bound for Portland, had been one of the first to escape the blockade on the Oregon Short Line; the first after the mail trains and following them, it was creeping forward, hoping to pass the treacherous

banks of the Snake River and reach the high ground and the foot hills of the Rockies before darkness descended.

At the window in one of the sleeping cars a small, forlorn-appearing boy, about fifteen years of age, was huddled in the corner of the cushioned seat, gazing out over the seemingly endless vista of sage and thorn toward the gloomy mountains that hedged in the desert. His sandy hair was tousled, and his sun-burned, freckled face bore marks as of tears hastily brushed away. The blue eyes blinked with suspicious frequency, as if he were trying to wink back the tears. His hands were plunged deep into his trouser's pockets, and he was whistling lugubriously in his brave attempt to conquer his feelings. The scattered occupants of the sleeping car, grumbling and growling over the delay in their journey, paid small heed to the forlorn little figure huddled in the berth cushions. A big tear gathered in the blue eyes, refused to be winked away, and splashed down upon a freckled little hand, hastily jerked from its pocket to prevent the drop being seen. The boy glanced around, as if fearful that the tear

might be seen, and drew a grimy hand across his eyes, with smeary effect. Then he stared at a little girl who was standing looking at him with a half-puzzled, half-worried look in her brown eyes. She was younger than he was, scarcely more than ten years old. Her brown hair was tied with brown ribbons, and her face was serious.

"What are you crying about, little boy?" she asked, as she slid into the opposite seat.

"I wasn't crying—at least, not much," said the boy, half sullenly.

"You mustn't fib," she said seriously. "I saw you. You were, too, crying. What was it about?"

"Nothin'." The boy dug his hands deeper into his pockets and looked out of the window.

"I cry—sometimes," said the little girl, confidentially.

"Hello," said a voice. "What's this, a flirtation?"

The boy glanced up quickly and saw a big young man, with a monstrous pair of shoulders and a merry, boyish face, standing in

the aisle, laughing as he looked down at the boy and girl.

"It's none of your business, Mr. Smarty," said the small girl. "I'm not going to let you tease this little boy."

"Ho, ho," roared the giant. "Honestly I wasn't going to tease. I didn't mean to tease you at breakfast, anyhow. I was looking for you to make up. Now what's the trouble? May I help?"

"I don't know what the trouble is," replied the small girl. "I was just trying to find out. I saw this little boy crying"—

"Crying?" said the young giant. "Maybe he wasn't crying at all. Maybe it was a cinder in his eye. Here, let me see."

He sat down in the berth beside the forlorn, small boy, twisted a corner of his handkerchief, and prepared to operate to remove the cinder.

"'Tisn't a cinder," the boy admitted. "I had one in my eye this morning, but I got it out."

"That so?" inquired the good-natured giant. "Well, sometimes cinders hurt a long time after they're out. They feel as if they

still were in there. You traveling alone?"

"Yes."

"Gee, that's pretty lonesome, isn't it?"

"Yes-s-s-s."

"Where are you going?"

"Pearton, Oregon," replied the boy, rather proudly.

"Why didn't your daddy and mammy come with you?"

"I haven't any father or mother." The blue eyes blurred again to near the spilling point.

"There, Mr. Smarty," said the small girl indignantly; "see what you've done. You've made him cry again. Shame on you."

"I'm not going to cry," replied the boy indignantly.

"Gee, kid," said the giant tenderly, "I'm sorry I made that break. It's tough. I know, for I lost mine when I was about your size."

"Father has been dead two years," said the boy, comforted by the tones of sympathy. "Mama died a month ago—and I'm going to my new home."

A tear trickled down the freckled face, and

the little girl said: "Oh, I'm so sorry!"

"That's right, kid," said the big boy consolingly; "don't you be ashamed of them. It'll do you good, and Betty and I understand—don't we Betty?"

He put a huge arm around the shaking form of the boy and held him close, while the small girl nodded. For a moment or two the boy's body shook convulsively, then, with an effort, he calmed himself and wiped his eyes.

"Excuse me," he said. "I was trying not to, but I was lonesome and homesick."

"Don't you mind us, kid," replied the big boy encouragingly. "I'm lonely enough to cry myself. I never had a home—not since I can remember. Have you got a good home with that uncle?"

"He isn't really my uncle," explained the small boy, sitting up. "He was father's oldest friend, and I was named for him. He is very rich, and he owns big ranches and mines, and when—when mother—when mother was buried, he sent for me to come to him."

"Say, isn't that fine?" asked the young giant enthusiastically. "I bet you have the

dandiest time out there. It's a great country. I've been through there three or four times."

"Will you have ponies and real live play-things?" asked the small girl, becoming interested.

"You bet I will," replied the boy. "Uncle Jim wrote that I could have a pony and guns, and dogs—and play baseball"——

"Say, did you ever play baseball?" inquired the young giant.

"Sure," said the boy eagerly; "back home, in Ohio, we had the bulliest kid team in town. We licked them all last summer—that is, that weren't too big."

"You did!" exclaimed the giant. "I'll bet you were pitcher?"

"No—not often. I played third most of the time; only sometimes I had to pitch or catch."

"Say," the young man exclaimed; "I'll bet you could beat 'em all pitching if you tried. I'd like to teach you."

"Did you ever pitch?" inquired the boy, gazing at the new friend with some awe.

"Betty, did I ever pitch?" asked the young

man, roaring with laughter. "Why I've been pitching since I was knee high."

"He's our best pitcher, even if he does try to tease me all the time," the little girl testified.

"On a regular club?" inquired the boy eagerly.

"Regular club?" the young giant roared with laughter and the little girl laughed gleefully. "Say, we made 'em think we was a regular club last year, didn't we Betty?"

Betty nodded her small brown head in vigorous affirmative.

"What club do you pitch for?" asked the boy eagerly.

"Giants," replied the big boy. "I'm Krag."

"Not 'Gatling' Krag? You 'Gatling' Krag?" The boy's eyes were wide with awe and surprise. "Say—I've got a dozen pictures of you in my trunk—and I never knew you"——

He suddenly remembered his manners and, extending his small hand, he said seriously:

"Mr. Krag, I beg pardon, I forgot to in-

troduce myself. I'm James Lawrence Kirkland, only the fellows call me Jimmy."

Krag shook hands solemnly.

"I'm glad to know you, Jimmy," he said. "And this is Betty, our best mascot."

"My papa is secretary of the club," said the small girl, as she bobbed her head in response to the boy's awkward bow. "Papa takes me on trips sometimes."

"Gee, isn't that bully?" said the boy, his tears forgotten and his freckled face aglow. "Gee, I'd like to do that."

"The team is in the second car behind this," said Krag. "Come on back, it won't be so lonesome."

"Don't you let Mr. Krag tease you," warned the small girl. "He's the worst tease of any of the boys, but he's nice."

A few moments later Jimmy Kirkland followed his new friend into the private car of the Giants, who were en route to the Pacific Coast for the spring training trip. Jimmy recognized in the sprawling young men occupying the berths, reading, lounging or arguing, some of the baseball heroes of whom he

had read, and he found it difficult to reply to their good-natured greetings.

Krag's goodness of heart and his unfailing sympathy for all creatures in distress was a team joke. He always was nursing a stray cat or befriending some luckless tramp, and some of the results of his kindness caused the other players to look with distrust upon his friends, but the sight of Jimmy Kirkland's tear-washed blue eyes, now alight with excitement, and his flushed, freckled little face caused them to extend instant welcome even before Krag could whisper to them how he had found Jimmy.

Under charge of his big patron, Jimmy was taken through the car and introduced to each of the players, whose names he had read in the newspapers and whose portraits he had collected and treasured, and who now joked and laughed with him as if he belonged to them. In a short time he found himself entirely at home, and recounting with much detail the stories of the games his team had played. The darkness had gone out of his life, and the loneliness from the day. Through the entire afternoon he listened

with wide open ears and eyes to the baseball players. Krag had found a baseball, and he spent two hours showing Jimmy how to grip his fingers upon the sphere, how to swing his arm in pitching, and gave his small friend long and serious instructions upon the care of what he called his "salary wing," which was his pitching arm. It was dinner time before Jimmy realized it. The train was past the worst of the flood district, and gathered speed as it rushed toward the foot hills. He apologized for staying so long, but Krag refused to permit him to go, and took him to dinner in the dining-car, where he ate with three of the great Giant players, listening with excited brain to their stories and arguments.

It was nine o'clock that night before Jimmy, wearied by the excitement and incidents of the day, nodded in the midst of one of Krag's stories of a game.

"Here, here," said the pitcher, shaking him; "I've talked you to sleep! Time to turn in. We play Portland to-morrow. You've got to stay over there until evening to catch the train south, so you come with me

and see the game. I'll put you on your train. Now to the hay."

Jimmy was only half awake when Krag picked him up in his great arms and carried him to his own berth, helped him disrobe and then tucked him under the blankets as tenderly as a mother might have done. He was asleep almost before he had finished bidding his new friend a sleepy good-night.

Krag stood looking down at him a moment before buttoning the curtains of the berth. "Poor little kid," said the big pitcher, and tiptoed away as if fearing to waken the boy, who already was dreaming that he was a Big League pitcher—as big as Krag.

CHAPTER II

A Lesson from the Big Leaguers

WHEN Jimmy Kirkland awoke from his dreams of triumphs on many baseball fields—dreams strangely filled with giants who had the faces of good-natured boys—the train was twisting and swerving around the bases of scalloped hills that hedge in the mighty Columbia River. At one side of the tracks the hills rose sheer and rocky. From their crests water falls poured down the rocks and, in places, solid streams spouted from holes in the face of the cliffs, as if from the nozzles of underground hose. On the other side, fifty feet below the tracks, the great river spread itself in a series of mighty rapids over the stony floor. Far across this water-torn crevasse in the mountains, the brown-black, naked hills shut off the view.

The train was racing past The Dalles when Jimmy sat up and looked out upon the

great river. But on that morning the beauties of nature had no attraction for Jimmy Kirkland. His mind was filled with the thoughts of the famous baseball players he had met and the desire to see more of them. Already he was planning the wonder story he was going to write to Billy Goins and Freddie Shepherd, of his team back home in Ohio. His eyes filled with sudden tears as he remembered that "home" no longer was "home." He dashed them away in an instant and dressed with the rapidity of a small boy long accustomed to making his own toilet. A hasty plunge of the freckled face into the basin in the washroom, a quick plastering down of the stock of stubborn, sandy-colored hair, and Jimmy, his face glowing from excitement and brisk rubbing, was ready for the day. He made his way quickly through the swaying train to the dining-car. A few of the Giant ball players were at their breakfasts, and they called cheery greetings to the youngster. Betty, who was breakfasting with her father and mother, smiled at him. Jimmy sought in vain for his friend Krag, and it was with a sense of disappoint-

ment that he sat alone at a small table. His breakfast of toast and eggs and marmalade was placed before him, and he was beginning to eat when a cheery roar, followed by a vigorous slap on the back, greeted him.

"Hello, Jimmy," said the big pitcher. "Up early I see? Did you order for me? I should say not! How do you expect to be a pitcher and eat no more breakfast than that?"

Krag eyed Jimmy's breakfast scornfully, and proceeded to issue an order that left the colored waiter grinning and filled Jimmy with astonishment. And, after concluding, Krag added, "*And* a pot of coffee, a stack of wheat cakes and syrup. I'm not hungry."

"You see, Jimmy," he explained; "a ball player needs a lot of sleep and rest, and a big breakfast. He mustn't eat any luncheon, excepting perhaps a plate of soup and a bit of fish and maybe some pie and ice cream before the game, and then he's hungry and ready to eat a good dinner at night. How do you hold the ball for a fast one?"

Krag's final question was a review of the lesson in pitching he had given Jimmy the preceding afternoon.

"You grip it with the first two fingers caught on the seam at the top of the ball and the thumb underneath, with the other two fingers doubled over and touching the sides of the ball. Pitch it as straight overhand as possible," Jimmy recited rapidly, eager to prove to his instructor that he had not forgotten.

"And the spit ball?" queried Krag, nodding in pleased fashion as he filled his mouth with toast.

"You hold it the same, only with the thumb caught on the seams and the fingers on the smooth leather, and you put slippery elm or saliva on the spot where the fingers touch and pitch it straight overhand like a fast one," repeated Jimmy.

"You'll do," mumbled Krag, munching toast. "Now, this afternoon I'll take you out and give you a try out. You see I'm depending on you to show these kids out here on the coast how to pitch."

"I am a pretty good hitter," said Jimmy hesitatingly, because he feared that it might sound as if he were boasting.

"Then you'd better stick with the team and

teach Krag how to hit," remarked Clancy from across the aisle, and the players roared at the expense of the big pitcher, who was notoriously a poor batter.

"You can hit, eh?" asked Krag, joining the laugh on himself. "Well, Jimmy, if you can hit, don't you be a pitcher. You save that salary wing and get into the outfield with some of these loafers who commence to kick if the pitcher lets one batter hit a fly out to them. All an outfielder wants to do is to bat, and he lasts ten years after the pitcher has worn his arm out."

The argument between pitchers and fielders still raged when breakfast was over, and Jimmy was taken back into the Giants' car again. The morning ride down the Columbia was a bewildering experience to the small boy, who clung closely to his friend Krag and listened with puzzled face to the joking and merriment of the players, which increased as they neared the end of their long journey across the continent. He was absorbing bits of baseball knowledge, and kept up a stream of inquiries which, at times, taxed the ingenuity of his new friend to produce explan-

ations and replies. Krag piloted him safely through the crush at the railroad station on their arrival at Portland. It seemed to Jimmy that all the people in the city were there to welcome the famous baseball players, and when the team had gathered in a group in the big train shed, Krag placed Jimmy in the front rank while they posed for a photograph for the newspapers.

"Come on, Jimmy," said Krag, after the players had been assigned to their rooms in the hotel; "we've got to dig you up a suit somewhere. It won't do to have you on the field without the spangles."

"Please," Jimmy pleaded; "I have money; I can pay. You've been too kind to me—"

"Nothing doing!" retorted Krag indignantly. "This is my treat. I'm flush. I touched the club for a big wad of advance money."

In spite of Jimmy's protests he was borne off to a sporting-goods establishment. The clerk recognized Krag and, at his bidding, he searched the store, dragging out everything that a boy could want. Jimmy saw a dozen uniforms that would have satisfied him, but

Krag declared they were not good enough, and finally bought a wonderful uniform, shoes with real spikes on them, stockings, cap and finally a sweater, just the color of those worn by the Giants. To cap the climax, he chose a bat which, after much weighing in his hand, Krag declared to be filled with base hits.

"There's nothing like a lot of drive in the old war club, Jimmy," he said. "Pick the clean timber that rings."

Jimmy was eager to carry all his new possessions back to the hotel, but Krag ordered them sent, and they strolled back through the thronged streets.

The new uniform arrived shortly after lunch, at which Jimmy, anxious to follow rules, ate only a cup of soup, and at two o'clock he went to the room with Krag to dress. Krag showed him how to double towels over a belt and drape them around his legs inside the trousers.

"Better than pads," declared the big pitcher seriously. "Never get sliders with them. Sliders are terrible things."

"Never noticed you with any," taunted

Uppman, who was dressing in the same room. "Don't stand for his advice, Jimmy. He never hit the dirt in his life."

Uppman's raillery failed to shake Jimmy's belief in his idol. Besides, he was too busy adjusting his new uniform to pay much attention. When the team started for the ball park, Jimmy sat between Krag and Mason, the famous old catcher, and felt that every boy in Portland envied him. He strove to imitate the unconscious appearance of the players, and, clinging to his bat, he listened to the pitcher and catcher as they discussed the signs they were to use that afternoon. It was the first game the Giants had played since the preceding fall, and the prospect of being pitted against a club, even of minor league players, who had been in training a week or more, and some of whom had been playing baseball all winter in southern California and in the desert, was not pleasant to them. Jimmy learned, with an odd little catch of surprise and disappointment in his throat, that they were not certain they would win the game. He wondered, too, at their lack of enthusiasm and the calm, unconcerned

manner in which they spoke of probability of being beaten. Jimmy had not supposed that any team could beat his heroes, and his alarm amused Mason, who said:

"Kid, there is one thing you must learn if you ever are going to be a ball player, and that is to take it as it comes. Fight as hard as you can to win every game, and, if they beat you, grin and come back at them harder than ever the next time. If you worry over games that are lost, you will never win. Forget the lost ones and go after those that are yet to be played."

The day was perfect, bright, sunshiny, and with the new warmth of spring in the air. After the miles and miles of snow in the prairie states, the floods and blackness of the desert and mountains, Jimmy was astonished to see the apple and peach trees in bloom and here and there flowers budding and blossoming. Krag pointed away to the great white cones that lifted themselves above the far mountain ranges and showed Jimmy Mount Ranier, looming far to the northward; Hood, towering in the nearer distance, and the majestic crest of Shasta rising above the

cloud bank that seemed to hover around its lower slopes.

"Down there, near him, is where you will live, Jimmy," he said. "From your town, Shasta always is in sight."

"It doesn't look very far," ventured Jimmy. "I thought Mount Shasta was in California."

Krag was still explaining distance when they reached the ball park. A great crowd rose and cheered as the Giants came onto the field, and Jimmy, trotting along with the players, heard many inquiries as to himself and strove, as he saw the players doing, to pretend that he neither heard nor saw the crowd.

"Come on, Jimmy," ordered Krag, selecting a practice ball. "Get on your mitt and warm me up. I'm going to pitch the last three innings. I'll show you how to pitch when the old whip limbers up."

Jimmy was frightened. He had heard so much of the wonderful speed of the famous pitcher that his heart thumped as he trotted out onto the field and took his position near Mason, who was slowly catching and tossing

the ball thrown him by Terhune, the great left-handed pitcher. Krag stood sixty feet away, looking, it seemed to Jimmy, as big as Mount Hood itself. The giant pitcher slowly swung his arm and the ball came straight at Jimmy. For a trice he felt a desire to turn and run, but gritted his teeth and shut his eyes as the ball plunked into the big mitt and stuck there. Jimmy was surprised to find that it was so easy to catch a ball thrown by the great Krag. He tossed the ball back to Krag and, planting his feet more firmly, prepared to catch the next one. In a few moments he had forgotten his fears and was catching and throwing as if playing with the boys at home, and all the time watching the great Mason and striving to imitate him. The crowd, observing his smallness in comparison to the gigantic pitcher, applauded when he caught the ball and, excited by the attention bestowed upon him, he worked harder and harder. Krag, delighted over the attention his small friend was attracting, was throwing faster and faster as his arm muscles loosened. He did not observe that Jimmy was having more and more trouble to

hold the ball. Several times the ball bruised and hurt the little hands, but Jimmy concealed his hurts and kept on. Krag, without noticing it, put more power back of his pitches, and finally threw almost at his greatest speed straight at the youngster. The ball tore through his hands, struck him heavily on the chest and he fell gasping for breath. The young giant, realizing that his carelessness had caused the accident, rushed forward, full of fear lest he had hurt his young friend seriously. Already Mason had lifted Jimmy and was rubbing the spot where the ball had struck.

"Forgive me, Jimmy," pleaded Krag, kneeling beside him. "I didn't notice I was throwing so hard. I didn't mean it."

"It—it's—all—right," gasped Jimmy. "I ain't hurt a bit. That one got past my mitt. Come on, pitch some more. I can hold them."

He struggled from Mason's arms, stuck his hand into the big mitt and pounded it with his knuckles, as he had seen Mason do.

"That's enough. You might get hurt," said Krag.

"Just a few more," pleaded Jimmy. "Honestly I can hold them."

"What do you think of that?" asked Krag of Mason.

"Pitch some more to him," whispered Mason. "It'll break his heart if you don't."

The crowd, which had watched anxiously while the boy was down, applauded when he resumed his position and cheered wildly when Krag, winding up as if to use his full speed, threw carefully into the big mitt.

Then Jimmy, flushed and triumphant, squatted as he had seen Mason do and stuck down the two fingers inside his mitt—the signal he had heard them arrange in the carriage. Krag stared at him in surprise; then, winding up, he pitched a wide, sweeping curve and, running forward, shook hands with Jimmy and led him to the bench as the crowd cheered.

"What *do* you think of that?" demanded Krag of the other players. "What do you think of *that*?" After I'd knocked him down, what does that kid do but get down and signal me for a curve? Game? Say,

he's as game as they make 'em. I wish he was mine."

The game was a whirl of confusion for Jimmy. For six innings Krag sat with him on the bench explaining everything that was done, and how each ball was pitched and why. He was like a boy in a trance when, at eight o'clock that evening, Krag put him aboard the south-bound train, loaded down with his new uniform, packed in a neat roll, and a dozen new balls that Krag had wheedled the manager into giving him.

"Good-bye, Jimmy," said the big pitcher, shaking hands solemnly. "Don't forget to write me, and don't forget that if that new uncle of yours ever wants to release you, I'll sign you."

The big pitcher, fearing the tears that were gathering in the grateful blue eyes, jumped from the train, and a moment later Jimmy Kirkland waved his farewell from the window and the train bore him southward toward Shasta.

CHAPTER III

Jimmy Arrives at His New Home

FAR away, yet towering over the land as if to topple upon and crush the nearer mountains and fill the valley, Shasta reared its snow-crowned crest. The sun, still hidden behind the mountains, tinged the tip of the cone with gold, that shaded downward into dull fiery red, then deeper, and finally blackness. The Southern Pacific train that had halted a few moments was laboring southward toward California, the engines already feeling the grade which presently would become steeper as they commenced the long climb over the Siskiyou—the mountain barrier that marks the boundary line of the states.

Jimmy Kirkland stood upon the platform of the little redwood station, gazing southward toward the disappearing train from which he had just debarked, as if the last tie that bound him to his old life had been

severed. He turned to look up the wide, unpaved main street of Pearton; a street bordered by one-story frame houses, with a few brick buildings that contained the bank, the Chamber of Commerce and the Pearton Public School. His small suit case, upon which he had carefully deposited his uniform roll, his mitt and spiked shoes, remained where the porter had dropped them, and he clung to his precious bat. The magnificence of Shasta at sunrise caught and held his eyes, and he stood gazing upward toward the lighted crown of the great volcano with something of the awe that the Indians felt when they worshiped Shasta.

Shaking off the spell of the mountain, Jimmy picked up his belongings and stood irresolute, puzzled as to which way to turn. His trunk, dumped from the baggage car, stood at one end of the platform, and while Jimmy stood trying to decide which way to turn, a man came from the baggage shed and wheeled a truck toward the trunk.

"If you please," said Jimmy, coming near the man; "can you tell me which way to go to find Mr. James Lawrence's ranch?"

"Four miles out, on the up-river road; big bungalow set back in the orchards," replied the man. "Hello," he ejaculated, suddenly jerking the truck to a stop; "are you the one who telegraphed to him from Ogden? Well, he isn't expecting you. He didn't figure you could get through until to-morrow, and I don't reckon he'll be in to-day."

"I'm glad I didn't get him up this early," said Jimmy. "If you'll tell me the way, I'll walk, thank you."

"If I were you," suggested the agent, interested in the boy's manner, "I wouldn't tackle that walk. Four miles out here is a long ways. Better go over to the hotel and get breakfast and wait for a wagon to come in from the ranch, or telephone Mr. Lawrence and he'll come in."

"Thank you," replied Jimmy, "but I don't want to trouble him. Besides, I'd rather walk. I'll leave my suit case here, if you don't mind, and walk. I've got to go into training."

"Training, eh?" inquired the agent. "Better leave all your things here and I'll send them on the wagon."

"I think I'll take these things," replied Jimmy, selecting uniform roll, balls, bat and mitt. "I don't want to lose them. They're valuable."

The agent laughed as he pointed out the road and gave directions, and Jimmy, thanking him, stepped out briskly along the road through the town.

"Those contraptions will weigh a ton before you get there," the agent called after him. Jimmy realized the truth of the prediction before he had crossed the first rolling hill, that shut out the town from his view. His road skirted the banks on a noisy little river, trapped here and there by small dams that sent the water flowing more quietly through narrow ditches to irrigate the fields. The rolling hills were covered with acres and miles of pear and apple trees now at full blossom. Below, along the creek, the vivid green of new alfalfa and the varying hues of green of growing truck crops added to the freshness of the country. Straight ahead, seemingly only a mile or two away, the mountains arose, pile upon pile, and retreated steadily as he advanced, seeming never to be

closer. He had thought to find the ranch in the mountains, but, after he walked until weary and sat down to rest, the mountains appeared as far away as ever, and Shasta seemed to have run away as the cloud gathered upon the summit, and the slopes grew hazy.

It was past eight o'clock when a dusty, weary little figure, still clinging to the treasured gifts of the preceding day, turned into the broad avenue leading from the river road up toward the wonderful brown and red bungalow just visible at the crest of the hill, its red and green gables showing over the tops of the waves of blossoming pear and apple trees. A laborer at work near the stone gateway guarding the avenue entrance had told Jimmy that this was Shasta View, the home of James Lawrence. Jimmy was near the end of his long journey. He hesitated, marveling at the bigness of everything. This was his new home and, although he had come bravely, a sudden fear that he would not be welcome came upon him. He suddenly felt very small and helpless and lonely, and he was seized with a desire to

turn and flee. He felt a vague fear of meeting the man who had been his father's oldest and best friend and of whom he had heard many wonder tales. The realization that he had no longer any place to which to flee added to his loneliness, and he found himself wishing that he had remained at the old home, or had been able to continue with his kindly big friends of the baseball team.

He was tired after his long walk, and hungry, as he had eaten nothing since dinner the preceding night; and, summoning all his courage, he went forward up the long avenue, set with ornamental flowering bushes, and ascended the wide stairway that led to the great porch that ran around three sides of the wide bungalow.

In response to his ring a Japanese servant came noiselessly over the rugs of the wide entrance hall and informed him that Major Lawrence was at breakfast. The mention of breakfast stirred Jimmy's aggressiveness.

"Please tell Mr. Lawrence I'm here," he said.

The servant disappeared and immediately emerged hastily followed by a volley of

threats and abuse. The yellow boy was grinning, and an instant later Jimmy was ushered into a large room, one side of which was all glass, through which was revealed the wonderful panorama of valley and mountain, with Shasta towering above them; the other sides of the room were of dark-paneled wood. At one end of the room a wood fire was crackling in a wide fireplace, throwing out heat that took the chill from the morning air. The walls were decorated with heads of deer, the antlers of elk, mounted birds of brilliant plumage, and on the floor were strewn rugs made from the skins of deer and bear, mountain sheep and one of buffalo.

Jimmy stood just inside the door, forlorn, dusty and with his precious baseball trophies still in his arms, looking friendless and at bay. His eyes scarcely had taken in the details of the furnishings of the room when they met those of a white-haired, white-mustached man seated at the head of the table.

"Well," demanded the man in a stern voice, "what do you want? What is your

business that it is important enough to break up my breakfast and ruin my digestion?"

He scowled fiercely toward Jimmy—who felt a sudden sinking of the heart.

"I—I," he hesitated, "I'm James Lawrence Kirkland— They told me— I thought—I thought I'd be welcome here."

"You—you Charlie Kirkland's boy?" The man sprang from his seat and advanced toward Jimmy. "You Charlie's boy?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jimmy, startled by the change.

"Great heavens, how did you get here, boy?" demanded the man. "Why didn't they meet you? I'll have someone skinned alive for this."

"Please don't, sir," begged Jimmy in alarm. "I walked, sir. The station agent told me you were not expecting me and I didn't want to trouble you"——

"Walked? Walked? All the way from town? Confound those people. I'll have that station agent discharged. I'll discharge them all. The idea of letting *you* walk. Fine welcome to my boy. I'll have every one of 'em flogged"——

He stopped in the midst of his indignant outburst and placed his hands on Jimmy's shoulders, drawing the boy toward him, gazing down at the dirty, little freckled face.

"You *are* Charlie's boy," he said as if to himself. "You're Charlie Kirkland all over again."

His gray eyes winked hard and his voice trembled, and then, without warning, he burst out again:

"Confound 'em! They've sent me a man and I was expecting a baby! Boy, I thought you were a baby! I was expecting a nurse to bring you—and here you've *walked!*"

He changed again.

"Charlie Kirkland's boy," he repeated. "You're my boy now—Larry; my boy."

He stopped suddenly and kissed the boy. Jimmy, with a sudden sense of relief, clung to him and could not speak, struggling to hide his emotion. He had found a home, a welcome.

"Be a man," snapped the man sharply. "Be a man. Don't be a crybaby. Why, confound it, if your dad knew you were crying

he'd take a strap to you and larrup you good."

He dabbled at his own eyes with his napkin, scolding Jimmy to hide his own emotion.

"Confound it, you're hungry," he roared accusingly. "Why didn't you say so? Here all these lazy rascals have been letting you starve. Here, Chun, Looie, Tom, you young rascals, this is your young master. Hereafter you belong to him. Take him to the washroom, Chun, and you others bring his breakfast as fast as you can or, confound you, I'll skin you alive."

The yellow boys, accustomed to the dire threats and the tenderness of their master, grinned as they hurried to obey his orders. In five minutes Jimmy, his face scrubbed and glowing, his clothes brushed, sat at the table beside Major Lawrence making an attack upon the food served by the soft-footed waiters that would have aroused the admiration of Krag. As he breakfasted he listened to the stories Major Lawrence had to tell of his own boyhood, of how he and Charlie Kirkland, when but little more than Jimmy's own age, had come West together, how they had

starved and thirsted in the desert in quest of gold, how they had struggled in the wilderness of the Northwest in the early days, and how finally they had won fortune. He told how his chum, the father of the boy who listened, had left him, when great riches were in sight for both, to go back East and marry the girl he loved.

"Confound him," stormed the Major; "if he had had sense enough to stay he'd have been as rich as I am, but (and his voice grew tender) he wouldn't have had your mother, or you."

After breakfast Jimmy, who was commencing to feel better acquainted with his companion, although rather puzzled at his sudden changes of mood, sat on the wide porch before the bungalow and told Major Lawrence of his adventures during the trip westward; of his meeting with Krag on the train. He was astonished to find that Major Lawrence did not know who Krag was, but explained carefully. He told of the game at Portland, and brought his treasures to exhibit to Major Lawrence, who asked more questions about Krag and said:

"I'd like to meet that fellow. His heart is in the right place."

"Come on Larry, he said; "I want you to meet Sairy. Don't let her scare you. Her bark's worse than her bite."

"Larry?" asked Jimmy in surprise. "Mama used to call me that sometimes."

"Your dad used to call me Larry, boy," the man said tenderly. "I always thought of you as Larry. I christen you Larry now. Come on and meet Cousin Sairy."

Cousin Sairy proved to be a woman of past middle age, who gave the boy a sour look and shook hands as if she feared her hand would be soiled.

"I'm pleased to meet you," she said stiffly. "I hope you won't always be cluttering up the house."

"Come on, Larry," said Major Lawrence; "the hosses are coming round, and I'll drive you around and show you the ranch."

"Is there room for a baseball diamond anywhere?" inquired Larry anxiously, as a light buckboard drawn by two ponies dashed up to the front steps.

"Well," said the Major, chuckling, "we might find a place. There's the hoss ranch back of the pear orchard. There's about two mile square of that. Maybe that would be big enough."

CHAPTER IV

A Letter

SHASTA VIEW RANCH, May 11th.

MR. WILLIAM KRAG,

Giant Baseball Team.

Dear Mr. Bill: I read in the paper about the fine game you pitched last Friday when you beat Pittsburgh. Gee, but I wish I could have been there to see you! I have been reading the papers every time Uncle Jim brings them home, and once in awhile, when he goes to Portland or Salem, he brings me New York or Chicago papers so I can read all about what you and the Giants are doing. I'm sorry you aren't in first place yet, but I know you will be before long, and I'm sure you'll win the pennant.

I have been trying ever since I came here to write you a letter and tell you how I am and what I am doing, as I promised you to do when you put me on the train, but I haven't been certain where to send the letter until

I got a schedule, and besides, I have been so busy it does not seem a week since I came. I have been so busy I haven't even gone to school, and won't go until next fall, when I have to go away to a preparatory school. The town school is four miles away, and most of the four miles belongs to Uncle Jim's ranch. He has a school here on the ranch for the kids whose fathers work for him, but he doesn't want me to go to that. We almost had a quarrel about it, because I told him I'd rather go just like the other kids. He said it wasn't good enough for me and that he was going to have a tutor come here to teach me. I bet he don't. I don't want any tutor and, although Uncle Jim threatens and scolds and says he is going to lick me if I don't obey, he usually lets me do what I want to. He says he isn't doing his duty by me, and he ought to lick me good, but that if I want to go to the dogs, why to go. I think he is glad I want to play with the other kids and not think I'm better than they are, but he never will admit that he is. You see, Mr. Bill, he was my father's pal, he says, and he told father he would take care of me and take me

as his own boy; so if I really thought he wanted me to do anything, I would do it. He wanted me to call him father, but I just couldn't, so I call him Uncle Jim, and I love him just as much as if he were my own father. You'd like him, and I'm sure he likes you, because I told him all about you. He is always pretending to be mad and trying to scare everyone and make them think he's very severe and cruel, but he wouldn't hurt a fly.

I'll bet we've got a bigger ball field than you have, anyhow. Uncle Jim let us use any part of the horse ranch we wanted for our diamond, and it is more than two miles from the home plate to the end of center field. I bet even Mr. Clancy couldn't hit the ball over the fence, because there isn't any fence, excepting the mountains in center field.

I wanted to tell you about our ball club, and ask your advice about how to manage it. When I first came I was afraid I couldn't have any club at all. Uncle Jim owns thousands and thousands of acres. The ranch runs nearly to the town in the fruit lands and down to the river, and then to the east it runs

to the mountains and I don't know how far. He has saw mills and big forests and some mines back in the mountains. I never have been up there, but some day Uncle Jim is going to take me, when the snow goes off the higher mountains. That seems funny, with the summer down here. I thought there wouldn't be any kids to play with, but there are a lot of them on the ranch, only they are Mexicans and Chinese and Japanese and Negroes and all kinds, even Indians; but I've found them just like other boys. Uncle Jim gave me a pony to ride, and a gun and two dogs, but I was disappointed. One day I was catching one of the balls you gave me out in front of the bungalow, and after awhile I got tired of throwing it and was wishing I had some other kids to play with. I had marked a place on one of the packing houses and practiced pitching at it. Uncle Jim asked me what was the matter, and I told him I wanted to get up a ball team. He laughed and said he could fix it, if I didn't care what color the players were, and he sent Chun, one of the Chinese houseboys, out

to play with me. Gee, you ought to see Chun catch and run. He's a dandy.

You see, after I came Uncle Jim was afraid I wouldn't be happy, and he tried to do everything for me. That's the reason I was ashamed to ask for anything. He has done so much, I hated to tell him I was lonesome for some boys to play with, and they thought I was too proud to want to play with them, so I hadn't any friends. When he drove out that day to make the rounds of the ranch, he did not ask me to go with him, but in about half an hour kids commenced to come from all directions. He had told them all to come and play ball with me. Most of his workmen live in the little village—barracks they call it—down near the river, but there are tenant houses scattered all over the ranch, and the Japs live in one barracks and the Chinese in another. He had picked out every kid about my size on the ranch and told them to come and report to me. I didn't know what to do until Uncle Jim came back. We were getting acquainted and Uncle Jim laughed and said: "There is your team,

Larry, take them out and play ball with them as long as you want to."

Uncle Jim is that way. They all do whatever he wants them to do—only I didn't want them to play with me unless they wanted to do it; and, after we got acquainted and threw the ball around for a time, we talked it over and everyone said it would be great fun.

I'll bet your manager never had as much trouble picking a team. The boys were all kinds—Americans and Japanese, and two colored boys and three Mexicans, and two Chinamen and one Indian—and only one Irishman. Chun and Finnerty and I were the only ones who ever had played real baseball, but most of them had played one, two, three, at school and can catch and throw. Chun and I chose up sides, and we played until they commenced to learn, and then we picked two teams. Chun is captain of one, and I am captain of the other. We have beaten them every time, but then we ought to, as I have the best players. Last week I picked out the first team, and now we are practicing and are going to play a real game soon. Our team is: Sammy Blantin, catcher,

because he is best; I'm pitcher, Moretti is first base, Manuelo, second base; Chun, shortstop; Finnerty, third base; Nakayama, right field; Hanson, center field; Katsura, left field. Billy Linn, the packing-house foreman's boy, wanted to play, and he and Chun had a fight and I had to lick Billy, so now it is all right. I don't think this is the best team, but we will play and find out.

Sammy Blantin is one of the colored boys, and gee, you ought to see him catch. I've taught him all you told me and showed him how Mason stands, and he don't have many passed balls. I'm pretty wild, but, since I have been taking care of my arm as you told me to do, I have more speed. Somehow I can't make the spit ball drop. I couldn't find any fishing worms out here to rub my muscles, but the horse foreman gave me a lot of linament he uses. Gee but it burns! It took the skin off at first, but I put some water in it and it works fine.

Uncle Jim comes out sometimes to watch us play, and he has had a backstop built for us. He scolds and says it is all foolishness, but I think he likes to have us play. I haven't

started the boys training yet. Some of them kicked when I said we would not eat any lunch. Is it necessary to go without lunch when we are only practicing? I wish you were here to tell me the right things to do. The other day Sammy ate a whole quart of berries between innings, and when I told him that wasn't the way ball players do, he said he reckoned not; that you couldn't pick berries on your park.

Now, Mr. Bill, there is something I want to ask you about. The very best player we have is Benedicto Arnett, and we call him Benny and he is making trouble. He ought to be our pitcher, after I teach him what you taught me. He is bigger and stronger than I am, and can throw harder. His father is one of Uncle Jim's best men, and he thinks he is better than some of the boys. He is afraid to try to lick Sammy Blantin or Hanson or me, but he picks on the Jap boys and Chun and calls them names. I had to threaten to lick him because he picked on Katsura, who is a little fellow, and he is mad.

If I tell Uncle Jim that will make trouble, and I want to settle it myself. I want Benny

on the team, but he must behave himself. How does your manager do when players won't do as they are told?

Uncle Jim promised to take me to San Francisco or Portland to see games if your team comes there next spring. He says he would like to meet you, and I know you will like him, although he says baseball is foolishness.

If you are not too busy, please write to me and tell me what to do about the team, especially about Benny Arnett.

Yours respectfully,
JAMES LAWRENCE KIRKLAND.

(JIMMY.)

P. S.—Do you think axle grease will help me pitch a spit ball? I tried it, and it tastes bad.—JIMMY.

CHAPTER V

A New Foe

LARRY KIRKLAND'S letter to Krag, the Giant pitcher, gave a fair outline of the life into which the orphan had come, but there was one thing he had omitted, because, to mention it, seemed disloyal to his patron. That was the fact that Miss Sarah Lawrence had aligned herself as an active enemy of the boy and a persistent foe to all his plans and enterprises. The problem of how to meet this unexpected opposition perplexed and troubled Larry. Major Lawrence did not observe it, and the boy could not complain to him—even when Miss Lawrence was most unjust.

Just what position she occupied in the household Larry did not know. Major Lawrence, an old bachelor, and, although always gallant, an avowed woman hater, was one of the wealthiest men in Oregon—and in his own section of the state was known as “The

Timber King." He owned, besides the ranch, immense timber holdings in the mountains, mines in the Siskiyou, in California and Alaska. He was in the oil development of California, in coal mining in Alaska, and his wealth was spread over cattle ranches and irrigation projects.

He had come into the West a poor boy and, after struggles and hardships, had won competence that became great wealth with the development of the country. Unlike many of the pioneers, he had clung to his early timber grants, and the bulk of his great fortune was in them.

The Lawrence family had resided somewhere in Vermont, and after acquiring riches, the Major returned to his native village to find all the nearer relations dead, with the exception of Miss Sarah, an elderly maiden, a second cousin. He rescued her from poverty and made her his housekeeper, to share with him his tyranny over Shasta View. "Sairy," as Major Lawrence persisted in calling her, despite her speechless protest, was of soured disposition, and her elevation to a position of importance and con-

trol of weath failed to improve her vinegary temper, although usually she concealed it successfully during the presence of her benefactor. "Aunt Sarah," as Larry was instructed to address her, resented the coming of the orphan boy to Shasta View. Almost from their first meeting they had clashed, the boy feeling instinctively that she did not welcome him. Perhaps Miss Lawrence was jealous, for, up to the time of his arrival, she had ruled the bungalow completely, although she did not presume to attempt to extend her rule to the Major's office, or beyond the porches. Major Lawrence treated her as a constant source of sly amusement, and the house servants dreaded her sharp tongue. She had the New England gift of housekeeping and, with the exception of the Major's private room and his office, which she entered only surreptitiously on cleaning days, the bungalow was in speckless condition at all times. The Major, after years of roughing it, camping, living in mining camps and subsequent years of bachelor disorder, tolerated her at first, but as her capable management brought

the establishment into order and comfort, and improved the cooking, he grudgingly admitted that there are some things a woman can do almost as well as a man and, in secret, was grateful to "Cousin Sairy."

The coming of Larry, as he came to be called, with his over-abundant stores of life and spirits, was a sore trial to Miss Lawrence, and the condition of his room was the primary cause of friction between them. Boy-like, he resented her manner and tormented her. Her scant patience was exhausted by the discovery of fresh rabbit skins, birds' nests and various other boy treasures which he had collected to send back to his friends in Ohio. She had marched to Major Lawrence, indignantly displaying the collection, and the Major had roared with laughter instead of becoming angry. Larry resented this intrusion upon his privacy, but did not rebel openly until Miss Lawrence, in his absence, carried out his mud-stained baseball uniform and threw it into a woodshed. Larry rescued his treasured garb and was angry. When Miss Lawrence strove to scold him, his hot temper was aroused and he defied her

to touch his uniform again. After a wordy clash, Miss Lawrence reported to Major Lawrence that Larry had been impudent, had "sasssed" her and told her not to meddle with his things and to "mind her own business."

The feud that had sprung up between them grew in bitterness and, although Larry did not know it at the time, there was an underlying cause for the enmity. That cause was Benny Arnett, the boy who had given Larry so much trouble in the baseball team. Miss Lawrence had cherished a secret admiration for "Big Tom" Arnett, one of Major Lawrence's foreman, who was the father of the boy. The man had never observed the coquettish advances of the maiden who, after reaching the coy age of fifty-four without a love affair, had been captivated by the hearty good nature and the bigness of Tom Arnett. Arnett was a huge, quiet, easy-going fellow, who, in his youth, had married a Mexican woman of mixed blood and great beauty, who at her death, had left him with one child. The child was Benny, whom she had called Benedicto. Benny was a slender, dark-skinned, handsome boy, now nearly sixteen years of

age, who promised to develop the strength of his father, combined with the cunning and the evil traits of his mother's mixed race. For this sullen, dark-skinned boy Miss Lawrence had formed a passionate attachment, and she was his champion and supporter in all things. Benny was constantly in trouble with the other boys. He was overbearing and a bully in his relations with the black, yellow and brown boys, and sullenly aloof and jealous in his dealings with white boys, whom he hated because he felt the stain of his own cross-breeding.

Miss Lawrence had first formed the acquaintance of the boy in her efforts to attract the attention of the father, who never observed them even when half the men on the ranch were joking about her efforts to flirt with him. The boy, unaccustomed to the society of women, had met her advances with sullen resistance, but when they took the shape of gifts of cake and candy, of small sums of money and holidays in town, which gave him the chance to remain away from the ranch school, Benny relaxed and became one of the constant callers at the big house.

Miss Lawrence evidently surrendered her plans of winning the heart of the father and lavished the affection of her hungry old heart upon the boy, coming to consider him almost as her own.

Major Lawrence disliked Benny, although Arnett was one of his best friends. He had the dislike of his kind for people of mixed blood and the Westerner's contempt for the Mexican. He observed Miss Lawrence's infatuation for the handsome boy in silence, punctuated only by snorts. Only once did he break loose and express his opinion and then he said, "Sairy, you're an old fool," and stamped out of the house. As he was an outdoors man and spent most of his time in riding or driving over the ranch, Miss Lawrence and Benny Arnett had the bungalow to themselves and Benny, presuming upon his favoritism with the Major's housekeeper, assumed airs of superiority over the servants and over many of the other boys and girls of the ranch.

The coming of Larry Kirkland and his establishment as the heir and successor of the childless Major Lawrence was a heavy blow

to the hopes of Miss Lawrence, who had cherished secret ambitions for her favorite, and a heavier one to Benny Arnett, to whom she had confided her hopes. Larry did not suspect or observe the enmity of Benny Arnett, who with the cunning of his mother's people pretended friendship and concealed his bitterness. It was not until Larry commenced the organization of the Shasta View baseball team that he discovered that Benny was secretly spreading discontent among the boys. At the first practice, Larry discovered that Benny could run faster and throw better than any of the others and, after seeing him play, Larry enthusiastically chose him as a member of the team, offering to let him play first base, which, in boy teams, is much more important than it is among mature players. Benny had not shown any enthusiasm and had, indeed, accepted the honor as his due, and had stated churlishly that he ought to be pitcher, as he could pitch better than any of the others. Larry, striving to be democratic and fair, had suggested the election of a manager and a captain for the teams. He had done this, supposing, of course, that he would

be chosen because it was natural he should be continued in charge, at least until someone of the others learned more about the game. To his surprise, Benny sought both positions. Larry was elected manager, and because Chun had shown more skill and more interest, Larry was his supporter for the office of captain. When Chun was chosen captain by two votes' majority over Benny, the serious trouble commenced.

The day following the election Benny, after being told what to do, deserted the field, taking with him two of his friends. The open desertion had a bad effect upon the other players. Larry pretended not to care, but when he reached the ranch house he found Benny on the front porch, eating cake and tea with Miss Lawrence.

The young manager was angry, and stopping by the table he said:

"Benny, do you intend to play with us any more?"

"I'm not your servant and I won't be ordered around like a dog," said Benny, confident of the support of Miss Lawrence.

"I'm not trying to order you around," re-

plied Larry hotly. "We're all in the same club and we've got to play together and practice or we cannot win."

"Just because you're rich you can't boss me," said Benny sullenly.

"I should think you would be ashamed of yourself, James," said Miss Lawrence sharply. "Benny is very sensitive and he is not accustomed to being forced to associate with negroes and Japanese. You must not think that, because Cousin James is good to you, you are privileged to order the other boys around as if they were your slaves."

Larry's eyes blazed with angry protest over the injustice of the accusation and clenching his hands he stood facing Miss Lawrence.

"He is a sneak," he said, angrily. "If he told you that, he is a liar, too, and I'll fight him."

Miss Lawrence exclaimed in horror and threw up her hands, while her favorite shrank closer to her, fearing Larry would attack him.

"The idea!" exclaimed Miss Lawrence. "Swearing and threatening to attack poor

Benny, and in my presence, too! I shall tell Mr. Lawrence."

Larry realized that he had made a serious mistake in permitting his hot temper to rule him. That made him angrier than ever and he turned and flung himself from the porch and stalked angrily away. He knew that Major Lawrence would receive an unfair version of the scene on the porch. Instead of remedying matters he made them worse. Major Lawrence was stamping up and down the porch when he returned for dinner.

"See here, young man," stormed the Major, who had been striving to make himself indignant. "Aunt Sairy tells me that you've been abusing the boys, threatening them if they don't obey you, and swearing and trying to start a fight in her presence. What have you to say?"

The Major glared in his fiercest manner, ready to relent at the first opportunity.

"It is not true," said Larry hotly.

"She says you tell the boys you own this ranch and they've got to obey you, and that she heard you threaten to whip one of the boys if he did not obey you. I won't stand it,

sir, even from you. This ranch is not a slave pen. It is for equals: white, black, yellow—yes, blame it, even for Mexicans!”

The Major glared more fiercely than ever.

“Understand that?” he thundered.

“Yes, sir,” said Larry, standing his ground, facing the Major with scarlet cheeks and clenched fists. “Yes, sir, I understand that, but I’m going to lick him tomorrow.”

“What?” demanded the Major, roaring with surprised indignation.

“He’s a liar and a sneak, sir,” retorted Larry, firmly. “Besides, he is a tattle-tale, and he’s trying to break up my ball team, and I’m going to lick him.”

“You refuse to obey me?” demanded the Major. “Well, sir, I’m boss of this ranch! If you fight that boy I’ll skin you alive.”

“You may as well skin me now,” said Larry, half-sobbing from his passion. “Because I’ll lick him or make him lick me.”

He stood, his eyes flashing, half-choking with rage, and his little hands clinching and unclenching as he faced the Major, who was purple in the face. For a moment they stood

facing each other, then Larry turned and walked from the room. The servants sent to summon him to dinner could not find him. Larry had stalked out of the bungalow. Half a mile from the house he threw himself upon the grass, and the tears he had held back came in a flood, and his body shook with his sobs. Everyone, he thought, was against him—even the Major, who had been so kind and just. If he could have seen Major Lawrence at that moment his grief would have been less violent. The Major's rage had abated with astonishing suddenness. He slapped his leg with one hand and shook with silent laughter.

"Just like his dad," he said, gleefully. "Stubborn as a mule! He'll never give in. If he don't lick that Greaser, to-morrow, blame me if I don't lick him."

He slapped his leg again and roared at the servants to find Larry.

CHAPTER VI

A Fight and a Triumph

LARRY KIRKLAND had disappeared. In vain the servants, threatened and stormed at by Major Lawrence, searched the house, the grounds, the packing houses and barns. Not a trace of the boy who had stalked out of the bungalow after the stormy scene with his adopted uncle could be found. Major Lawrence was disturbed and a little alarmed. He admitted to himself that he had taken hearsay evidence against Larry. Somehow the boy's manner had convinced him that Miss Lawrence either had mistaken or misrepresented the facts. As the night grew darker and Larry failed to appear the Major tramped up and down the porches, scolding each servant who came to report failure.

It was ten o'clock when the Major suddenly laughed and slapped his leg, as if inspired by a sudden idea.

"By George," he said, "I've got it. Here, Lun, it's no use to telephone to town to stop the boy from catching a train. He won't go there. He'll stay around somewhere until he gets a chance to whip that boy, as he said he would. Tell them not to hunt any more. He will turn up in the morning."

Major Lawrence went to bed chuckling. His chuckles and laughs aroused the indignation of Miss Lawrence, who had begun to be frightened at the unexpected result of her meddling, and was conjuring up visions of the boy being killed by ferocious animals, or dying of starvation in the mountains.

"He'll be all right," the Major told himself. "I'll just watch that Arnett boy to-morrow and I'll find Larry. I wouldn't have Sairy know it for anything, but I'm not going to miss seeing that fight."

Larry, during all the search, was snuggled, tight and warm, under some canvas that had been thrown over a great heap of fresh and drying alfalfa, not half a mile from the bungalow. He felt keenly the injustice of the charges against him and the cowardly tattling of Benny Arnett, which contained just

enough truth to make it plausible. He found himself, as his anger abated, wondering if he had been "bossy" with the boys. He had not thought of it in that way, but he admitted to himself that he may have ordered the boys around too freely in his efforts to teach them to play. His decision that he must fight Benny never faltered. He planned that he would keep close to the bungalow until the opportunity to avenge himself presented, and, after he had whipped Benny, he would go away.

He pulled the tarpaulin so that he might look out, and cuddled in the warm, sweet-smelling alfalfa, he watched the moon rise over Shasta and flood the valley with light. He felt very small and lonely and friendless. He planned to take his pony and gun, and ride away into the mountains. Then he decided he would walk to town, catch the train to Portland and find a berth as cabin boy on some vessel sailing for the Orient. Then he planned that he would make his way East, find his friend Krag, and get him to make him mascot of the Giants. Like most boys of his age the idea of hunting, of camping, or

riding with the cowboys on cattle ranges, of going to sea, seemed to solve all youthful troubles, because boys forget that hunters and cowboys and cabin boys have more and greater troubles than they ever tell. Larry's plan of joining the Giants seemed to him better because, with them, he was sure of one friend. But, after a long time, he rejected all his plans because he could not take the pony, the gun, or the money the Major had given him and not feel that he had committed a theft.

He decided that he would take the garments he had brought with him to the ranch, just his own belongings, and go away and find work. He still was planning his melancholy future when he fell asleep, considering himself the most abused and ill-used boy in the world, and tracing all his troubles back to Benny.

The sun was shining through the rent in the tarpaulin when Larry awakened suddenly and sat up. He gazed around bewildered, then slowly remembered where he was and the events that had brought him there. He shook the straws from his cloth-

ing and descending quickly to the river, washed his hands and face in the icy waters; then, wandering along the stream, he picked a hatful of luscious raspberries, still cold and wet from the night dews, and watched the early morning sun rise over Shasta.

He was in a black mood that darkened the wonder of the day and hid the glory of the scene. He found a grassy spot near the river and ate his berries. In spite of himself he felt better, and, after resting by the river, and sailing stick boats over a little rapid for an hour, he decided that it was time for Benny to be abroad, and, pulling his cap tightly upon his trowsled head, he set out to find his enemy.

Keeping well out of sight of those at the bungalow, under cover of the old apple orchard, he presently came to the young pears, and through them he moved cautiously toward the schoolhouse. He knew that in coming from his home in the valley to the bungalow Benny usually made a detour so as to pass the school and taunt the pupils, who, he considered, were unfortunate in having to study instead of roaming the fields and

orchards. The assembly bell had not rung, so Larry, skirting a hedge of climbing roses that bordered the road leading from the bungalow to the school, threw himself upon the ground behind the hedge and waited. He saw Major Lawrence canter past on horseback and longed to say good-bye to the man who had been so kind to him. Larry could not refrain from gulping down the lump that came into his throat at sight of the Major, yet his determination did not waver.

Scarcely ten minutes afterward Benny Arnett came strolling down the road. He stopped near the school to shout taunts to some of the boys who were running to avoid being tardy, and came along the road, throwing stones at the birds in the fruit trees, although he knew that one of the Major's strictest rules was against throwing at birds or robbing their nests. Larry crawled through a gap in the rose hedge and waited, half-concealed, until Benny, occupied with his stone-throwing, came near, then he stepped into the road.

Benny was frightened. He half-turned,

as if to flee, then, as if determined to brave it out, turned and faced Larry.

"Put up your hands, I'm going to lick you," announced Larry, facing him threateningly, yet waiting for him to defend himself before striking a blow.

"I won't fight you. You could tell Major Lawrence," replied Benny, edging aside as if to brush past his foe. "Besides, I'm bigger than you are."

"I'll never tell Major Lawrence," said Larry. "You can't get out of it that way. You lied about me and I'm going to make you sorry for it."

"I never told anything about you," said Benny sullenly. "I only told Miss Lawrence how you always wanted to be boss and make us act as niggers for you."

"You're a liar; I don't." Larry advanced threateningly.

"You're a liar yourself."

Benny's angry response was ill-timed, in view of his anxiety to avoid a fight, for almost before it was spoken Larry's hand struck him flatly across the mouth. Hurt and stung out of his natural cowardice,

Benny sprang at his lighter and younger opponent and in an instant they were battling fiercely in the middle of the road. Benny, a year older, taller and stronger than Larry, felt that his strength was telling, felt Larry reel before his attack and his scant courage returned. Twice his blows sent Larry staggering and each time Larry sprang back at him, his teeth clenched and his face white with passion. One of his eyes was closed, his lip was cut and his nose was bleeding, but each time he was driven back he leaped again to the attack. He was fighting silently, determined to win and, hurt, panting and sobbing in his excitement, he forced the battle.

Both boys were panting and weary and Benny, having failed to rout his lighter foe, was commencing to give ground when Larry landed a vicious blow squarely on his nose. The coward strain of blood told. Benny struck wildly, then, covering his face with his arms, turned and started to run. In an instant Larry had leaped at him and was showering blows upon the protected head and face, sending him reeling and weeping along the road in full retreat. At every blow

Larry cried, "Say enough." Whether such fair methods of fighting were unknown to Benny or whether he was too confused to understand, cannot be told, but he failed to cry "enough" and Larry, battering him mercilessly, pursued him along the road.

Suddenly Benny dropped his hands and ran a few steps, then, whirling, he brandished an open knife that he had drawn from his pocket, and cursing wildly he rushed at Larry with knife upraised.

Larry, with a cry of anger, leaped backward at sight of the weapon, and at that instant there came an unexpected interference. Little Katsura, who had been a wondering spectator, leaped from the roadside. His hands seized Benny's arm. There was a sharp twist, the knife flew, glittering into the grass by the roadside, and Benny, weeping and whining as he nursed his twisted shoulder, sank down in the dust and pleaded for mercy. Larry, panting, bleeding, but victorious, stood over him, ready to strike should he resume hostilities. Benny made no effort to arise, remaining grovelling in the dust.

"I'll tell Major Lawrence how you did this," he whimpered.

"Coward!" said Katsura coldly.

"I'll save you the trouble," said Larry; "I'll tell him. Get up and shake hands. And if ever you tell any more lies about me I'll lick you again."

"Kick him so that he will not make the forget," suggested Katsura calmly.

"Get up and shake hands," ordered Larry, following the code of his father. Benny, sniffing and pretending to be badly hurt, arose and shook hands sullenly.

Fifteen minutes later Larry Kirkland, having repaired his damaged features and washed away as much of the blood and dust of battle as possible, marched into Major Lawrence's study. His lips were set tight and his face was pale, but he did not hesitate. He walked straight to where Major Lawrence was sitting and stopped before him.

The Major did not look up.

"I licked him, sir," said Larry desperately.

"Did you do a good job of it?" was the Major's response.

"Yes, sir," said Larry, astonished.

The Major looked up from his work, studied the face of his ward a moment, and remarked:

"Better go and have some raw beef put on your eye, or it will turn black."

"But, sir," stammered Larry, relieved, astonished and puzzled by the manner of the Major, "aren't you going to drive me off the ranch?"

"Drive you off the ranch?" snorted the Major indignantly. "Who said anything about driving you off the ranch? If you dare start, sir, I'll have you tied to a tree and flogged! Understand?"

Then his voice softened and he said: "Confound it, Larry, we need someone here on the ranch who can fight when he is right. Go get your eye fixed. What do you mean by standing here arguing with me?"

He concluded with a stern frown and angry tones, but as Larry turned to obey his heart was rejoiced. He knew that the Major understood and that he was restored to good standing.

Half an hour later, while the Major still was chuckling to himself and slapping his

thigh, Miss Lawrence rushed excitedly into the study.

"James," she half-sobbed; "James, something must be done. That terrible little beast you brought here half-killed poor Benny. The poor boy is so badly hurt we will have to send for a nurse or have him taken to a hospital——"

"Sairy," said the Major drily, "don't get excited. I saw that fight. I was sitting on my horse in the pear orchard, hoping Larry would lick him worse than he did. Wouldn't have missed it for anything."

CHAPTER VII

Winning Back the Pitcher

THE victory of Larry Kirkland over Benny Arnett restored the unity of the Shasta View team. Even those of the boys who in secret had sided with Benny either because of his influence over them or because Larry had insisted upon all candidates for the team working hard, turned against Benny when they heard of his attempt to use a knife during a fair fight. Katsura had spread the story of the fight and Larry became a kind of hero among the boys.

Larry was anxious to let bygones be bygones, and on the day following the fight in the road, which Major Lawrence persisted in referring to as "The Battle of Lundy's Lane," he made an effort to resume friendly relations with Benny by offering to teach Benny all he knew about pitching and to make him pitcher for the first team. Benny had sullenly refused, claiming that his arm,

which Katsura had twisted, was irreparably hurt, and declaring he did not care to learn the secrets of pitching which Larry had learned during his brief friendship with "Gatling" Krag, the famous pitcher.

So Benny continued to nurse his grievances and while he dared not show any open enmity, he continued his underhand attacks upon Larry, and strove to persuade several of the players to desert the team. In this he had the active support of Miss Lawrence, who, refusing to be convinced by Major Lawrence's story of the fight, conceived the idea that her favorite was being unjustly treated, and therefore lavished more tenderness upon the handsome boy. At the same time her enmity toward Larry Kirkland seemed to increase, and Larry found his relations with the mistress of the Shasta View bungalow more and more strained, and himself cut off from many of the privileges and rights he had enjoyed before the open hostilities commenced. Miss Lawrence forbade the team to dress in Larry's room and issued orders excluding dirty baseball uniforms, shoes and other necessities from the bunga-

low. This was a harder blow to the club than it seemed, as the freedom of the bungalow before and after practice, and the goodies that invariably were passed around after the boys had dressed served as added incentives to work. Of these things Major Lawrence knew nothing, as it was contrary to Larry's code of ethics to complain or to volunteer information of that nature. He believed in fighting his own battles, and while he felt that Miss Lawrence was unjust, he refused to seek redress.

The baseball team was making rapid progress through persistent practice and already the boys were beginning to talk of playing a game against some real opponent. A few of the more daring spoke of challenging the town team. The ranch school had closed for the summer, and many of the boys had work to do in the berry patches, in the ginseng field, tending the sluice gates when the water was turned in for irrigation purposes, or driving wagons. But there was time for practice three afternoons a week, and Larry, who had nothing to do but play and study; Chun, who was one of the house-

boys, and Katsura, who helped in the house work, often found time to practice.

Two letters had come to Larry from "Gatling" Krag, filled with whimsical instructions as to how a baseball team should be conducted, and much valuable information as to how the game should be played. Krag had good ideas of adapting the tactics of the major league to a team of boys, and his hints proved valuable to Larry. He ordered Larry to save the reports of baseball games that he found in the newspapers, and to take the details of certain plays and study them to see what each man did, and what he was trying to do. Many of these things neither Larry nor his players could understand, and often they placed themselves on the field as the report said the professionals had been, and tried to work out the plays for themselves. Sometimes they grasped the plan of the play and by trying it on their own diamond impressed it upon their minds.

There was one bit of advice contained in one of the letters from his friend that made a lasting impression upon Larry's mind. Krag had written:

"You may be able to lick your players, but licking them will not do any good unless you are fighting on the right side. If the other fellow is right a hundred lickings will not make him wrong. If you are right he will know it, or feel it, and he'll come around to your way of thinking sooner or later without a fight. Licking him doesn't do much good either way, and I've found that after you've whipped a fellow you feel as if you had been licking yourself. Never dodge a fight, but never look for one. It is wrong to fight, besides being hard on the eyes."

Krag's letters were filled with such advice—advice that would have been considered a great joke by Krag's comrades, for Krag's habits were not of the best, nor did he live by the code he preached. But to the boy into whose mind the advice sank deep, Krag was as good as his preaching. His letters were read and re-read a dozen times by the players and, more than anything else, they served to keep up the enthusiasm of the boys.

Larry Kirkland knew that unless a real game was played soon it would be impossible to keep the boys practicing faithfully. The

team had played several "scrub" games, and the little manager decided it was time to try them in a real contest. Major Lawrence, while he scoffed and scowled, pretending to believe that baseball was a foolish waste of time, really was much interested in watching the progress Larry was making, and his development in the art of leadership. So, when Larry went to him to request permission for the team to play a real game some Saturday afternoon, the Major assented readily and volunteered to grant a half holiday to all the workers on the ranch who might want to see the game. The suggestion astonished Larry, who protested that the second team was not really a match for the first, as he had taken the best players and it was the Major who proposed an equalization of forces. Major Lawrence discussed the situation as eagerly as if he belonged to the team and vowed that, if he were forty years younger, he would play and beat them all. After a long study Larry decided that he and Sammy Blantin, being the battery for the first team, would go to the second team for that day, and give Moi Kee and Memsic, the second team battery, to the

first team, and thus evenly divide the chances of victory.

The announcement that a real game of baseball was to be played on the ranch excited interest not only among the Shasta View workers and their families, but the owners and tenants of adjoining ranches. Shasta View was the largest ranch of the district and the news that it had a baseball team and intended to play a real game caused much interest, especially among the younger people. Major Lawrence, who never did anything by halves, entered fully into the spirit of the affair and issued invitations for his neighbors and friends to attend the game and make it a neighborhood picnic. Although there had been baseball games at Pearton each summer the ranchers were not much interested, and the teams usually disbanded after short periods. The prospect of baseball at home, with acquaintances, friends or members of the family as the players was a different thing. Many, even of the older ranch workers, never had seen a baseball game. To add to the interest Major Lawrence arranged for other games to take place in the great

horse pasture for the amusement of his guests.

To Larry Kirkland that day was one of the greatest in his short life. He never before had seen real cowboys engaged in their games of riding, roping cattle, and racing on their ponies. To the majority of the other spectators the riding of bucking bronchos and the other games were old stories, but to Larry, watching them for the first time, they were wonderful, and Major Lawrence smiled happily as he watched the excitement of his young ward over the feats of skill and daring.

It was three o'clock before the crowd gathered around the baseball diamond to witness the first baseball game ever played on Shasta View ranch. The Shasta Regulars looked very brave in their new gray and red uniforms when they appeared on the field to practice, and the round of applause that greeted them caused Larry to swell with pride, even if he was going to pitch against them. He batted grounders to the infielders, as he had seen the Giants do at Portland, and frowned over their fumbles or called cheer-

ing praise to the spry little fellows, brown, and yellow, and black, who scampered over the field, making the plays as they had been taught to do. It was his team and he was proud of it, and he regretted a little bit that he must try his best to defeat it in its first game. His heart was all with his team and against himself.

The Shasta Scrubs looked a motley crew as they trotted out to practice. One or two had makeshift uniforms, and only the captain, who was second pitcher for the Regulars, had the team uniform. Larry batted to them, coaching and encouraging them.

During this practice Larry saw Benny Arnett skulking sullenly along back of the crowd of spectators, and presently saw him climb into the buckboard in which his father was sitting to watch the game. With a sudden impulse Larry ran across to the buckboard, and, as Benny scowled down at him, he said:

“Benny, come on and play first base for the second team. I’m going to pitch for them, and with you on first we’ll have a chance to beat them.”

"I don't want to play on the Scrubs—with you," retorted Benny sullenly, making his refusal two-edged.

"Go on, Ben. Get in the game," his father urged, pleased that his boy should be invited. "Get out there and help Larry win."

"I won't play on a team with him," declared Benny defiantly.

"Well, then," said Larry, restraining his anger, "you play first base for the first team and we'll take Lui Moretti—that will make both the teams stronger."

Flattered in spite of himself and urged by his father, Benny showed an inclination to yield.

"I haven't any regular uniform," he objected sulkily.

For an instant Larry hesitated.

"Come over to the packing shed and I'll change with you," he offered quickly. "You can wear this one, and I'll put on your shirt and Chun's short pants. He left them there."

The sacrifice meant a great deal to Larry, more than he would have cared to admit. Yet he could not ask Moretti to surrender his uniform. Larry had been proud of his appear-

ance in the uniform that had been presented to him by Krag. He treasured it because of the giver, and he had clung to it in preference to taking one of the new uniforms Major Lawrence had ordered for the team. To surrender it to the boy who had been his enemy was a sacrifice not lightly to be made. He remembered the advice contained in one of Krag's letters, and determined to win Benny over to his side by showing him that he was wrong rather than by fighting him.

Benny's father had listened in disapproving silence to the conversation between the two lads. Larry's offer of his uniform annoyed the father and he said sharply:

"Benny, don't act the baby. You ought to be ashamed of yourself for wanting his uniform. You keep it, Larry; and you, Benny, get out there and play ball, if Larry wants you."

The big foreman was angry at his son's churlishness and was in a mood to enforce obedience.

"But, Mr. Arnett," pleaded Larry earnestly. "He ought to have the regular uniform to make the team look right. Besides,

he's the best first baseman we've got, and we want him."

Between being flattered by Larry's praise and frightened by his father's tones, Benny relaxed his scowl, and springing from the buckboard raced with Larry to the packing shed. Five minutes later they emerged, Benny wearing the gaudy uniform, even to the spiked shoes, while Larry was attired in Chun's blue and flapping trousers, a shirt with the sleeves rolled up, and a pair of shoes that were too large for his feet.

CHAPTER VIII

The First Game

THE crowd that circled the playing field applauded vigorously as the Shasta Scrubs took the field. Larry had won the toss and had chosen to send the Shasta Views to bat first, and as he led his makeshift team out to their positions and gave them the final instructions, the spectators cheered and laughed at their appearance. The players ranged from little Burton, a colored boy of twelve years, in right field, to Hanson, a lubberly Swedish boy of sixteen, and in the ranks were Chinese, negroes, Japanese, an Indian, a Portuguese boy and a representation of several other nations.

The crowd was massed along the right field line under the shade of the pear trees that paralleled the line about fifty feet away, while down the third-base line, buckboards, carriages and wagons were lined, each containing a group of men and women, boys and

girls, from the surrounding ranches. In the spaces between the vehicles, and grouped behind the lower wagons, cowboys sat upon their horses. Squatting upon the grass, smoking stolidly, were a dozen or more Indians from the Klamath reservation, wrapped in their gaudy blankets in spite of the heat of the afternoon, and conversing in grunts as they watched little Snow Eagle, son of one of the sub-chiefs of the tribe, who attended the ranch school, playing in the out field for the Scrubs.

The assemblage seemed a wonderful one to Larry, who, gazing along the lines of spectators, thought he never had seen so many different kinds of people in all his life. The scene was common enough to the ranchers, who paid little heed to the picturesque dress and appearance of the crowd in their interest in the players.

Chun, the wily little Chinaman, who seemed to absorb the spirit and the science of baseball even more quickly than the American boys, was made acting captain and manager of the regulars and he placed himself at the head of the batting order.

It was the first time Larry Kirkland ever had attempted to put his theories, learned from his major league friends, into practice, and he discovered to his consternation that Chun had learned his lesson well and was using Larry's own tactics against his teacher. One of the first things Larry had taught his regular players was that they never should hit at a bad ball. During their frequent practices he had insisted upon this, because Krag declared it most important of all, and had drilled his players hard, standing near the plate during batting practice and calling the attention of batters to their mistakes each time they struck at balls out of reach or so far from the plate that even if they succeeded in hitting them they could not hit hard. Chun came to the bat grinning. He had learned his lesson well and he refused to strike, or to be tempted into hitting at any ball. In vain Larry attempted to pitch the ball over the plate. He lacked control and realized that Chun was aware of that fact and was benefiting by it. Mr. Munson, who had been chosen to umpire because he had

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been a player at college, called the balls and Chun, grinning, trotted to first base.

Krag had impressed upon Larry's mind two things he considered most important. The first was that few boy pitchers are able to pitch the ball over the plate regularly and that, if the batters will restrain their impatience to hit and play to take advantage of this lack of control, they will draw many bases on balls and therefore score more runs. The other was that the pitcher who succeeds is the one who can make the ball go where he wants it to go and can, when necessary, put the ball over the plate between the shoulder and knee and who can make it go wide purposely when a batter is over-anxious to hit.

Larry realized that he had not mastered control of the ball, and that the Shasta Views, if they carried out his policy, would beat him badly. He was so anxious to pitch the ball over the plate to the next batter that Chun, with his quick eyes and agile brain, saw the opportunity, and gaining a great lead stole second base, not even giving Sammy a chance to throw. Larry saw that he must do something to check his opponents. 'He

abandoned his curve ball, of which he was so proud, because it would not go over the plate, and commenced to pitch straight balls, which he could not control better. He forced the Shasta Views to hit the ball, and, although they made two runs, Larry felt better. He had succeeded in conquering his wildness and remembered that Krag had said, "When you can't stop them by pitching, remember you have eight fellows back of you to stop what they hit."

Moi Kee, the diminutive pitcher, could not throw a curve nor did he attempt to deceive the batters. He threw every ball as straight over the plate as he could without an effort to deceive the batters. In vain Larry whispered to his players to stand still and not to hit, but to try for bases on balls. Some were too impatient to wait, and the others were compelled to hit, and the Scrubs retired without succeeding in getting even one runner to first base. Larry was little more successful in making the ball go over the plate in the second inning and the Shasta Views made three more runs, bringing the score up to five to nothing. They would have made

more, but they grew impatient and would not obey Chun, who was showing himself a good field general and urging his players to continue their waiting tactics.

The outlook seemed bad for the Scrubs until, with two out in their half of the second, Hanson drove a hit over second base and Larry followed with a long hit out to left, and scored on a wild pitch.

Larry realized the futility of attempting to deceive the batters and commenced pitching every ball straight and as fast as he could make it go. He ceased to issue passes to first, and the Shasta Views, who had been confident of easy victory, suddenly stopped scoring, and could not add to their advantage until the fifth inning, when little Burton missed an easy fly and gave them one more run. Meantime the Scrubs were improving in their attack and the batting of Larry, Sammy and Hanson, who had surprised everyone by hitting the ball hard every time he faced Moi Kee, brought the Scrubs closer and closer to the leaders. At the end of the sixth inning the score was six to five in favor of the Shasta Views and both clubs were

playing more steadily, while the excitement among the spectators increased. Larry had discovered early in the game that his players, with a few exceptions, could not hit even the easy pitching of Moi Kee and he was striving to make them stand closer to the plate and wait for good balls. Chun, scenting his plan, was urging and coaching Moi Kee, sometimes in English, sometimes in excited Chinese, to put the ball straight over the plate. The crowd had divided its sympathies, part of the spectators cheering the Shasta Views, while the larger number, because of the smallness of the Scrubs, were "rooting" wildly for the makeshift team. Relatives and friends of the young players shouted advice and warnings, applauded good plays wildly and groaned over the bad ones.

The Shasta Views scored two more runs in their seventh inning and it seemed as if they had the game won until, with two out in the Scrubs' half of that inning Snow Eagle reached third base and Larry reached first. Little Burton, the smallest player and the poorest batter on either team, was at bat, his black face shining, the whites of his eyes roll-

ing as he endeavored to do as Larry had told him. Larry started to steal second, and Memsic threw to catch him. Like a flash Snow Eagle tore from third base and sprinted across the plate before the surprised shortstop of the Regulars could throw the ball there, and Larry landed on second. He knew the ball had been thrown to the plate, and glancing there he saw that the throw had been high and that Memsic had let the ball get past him a few feet. He knew Burton would strike out and that to stop on the bases meant to be left there without a chance to score. He turned second base at top speed and dashed for third. Memsic, heeding the warning shouts of the players, seized the ball and threw it to third base. Again the throw went high and Larry, neither stopping nor looking, turned third, dashed for the plate, and an instant later he slid around Memsic and scored amid the cheers of the adherents of the Scrubs.

Larry went to the bench panting but exultant. He had proved another of Krag's bits of advice to be true. Krag had told him in two letters that the way to win baseball

games was to compel the opponents to throw the ball, and to continue to force the opposing players to throw as often as possible. Krag's argument was, that while a runner might be thrown out many times, sooner or later someone of the other team would throw wild and let the runner score. As Krag quaintly stated: "No team ever won a pennant getting left on bases."

The eighth inning was filled with excitement. It was only by stopping a hard line drive that Larry prevented the Regulars from adding to their score. In their half of the inning the Scrubs had runners on the bases from the start, but could not bat them around the square. The ninth started with the Regulars still leading by one run. Larry, in his anxiety to hold the Shasta Views, became wild again and could not make the ball go where he wanted it to go. But the strain also was telling upon the Shasta View players and Chun could not keep them from trying to hit and Larry did not fare so badly as he might have done. One batter was out, the bases were filled, and the crowd roaring with excitement when Benny Arnett came to

bat, encouraged by the applause and the noisy coaching of Chun, who had forgotten his English and was yelling at the batter in Chinese, to the intense delight of the crowd.

Aunt "Sairy" had become so excited that she was squealing to Benny to "strike it out," and caused a roar of laughter. Benny had hit the ball hard every time he had faced Larry and he strode to the plate full of confidence. Larry, tired and hot, stopped a moment to study the situation. The sneering expression on Benny's face roused his fighting spirit. His first thought was that he must get the ball over the plate or he would force a runner home with another score. Then an inspiration came to him. He remembered Benny had not practiced much with the team, and that his previous success in batting would make him over-anxious to hit the ball.

Unconsciously Larry was doing just what Krag would have done, or any great pitcher. He was studying the character of the batter and trying to discover what the batter was thinking, and what he would do. He decided that the thing to do was to pitch wildly, in-

stead of carefully to Benny, and to tempt him into hitting at bad balls. The first ball was thrown high, and Benny swung wildly at it. It was so high the ball almost escaped Sammy, who scrambled after it and prevented the runners from advancing. The narrow escape from a wild pitch caused Larry to be more careful. He pitched high again, and again Benny swung and missed. Larry saw Chun run out from the bench and whisper something to Benny. He knew Chun had told Benny not to strike at any more bad balls, and an idea flashed into his brain. He was smiling as he stepped back into position and pitched a slow, wide curve. Benny saw the ball seemingly coming straight at him and sprang back to avoid being hit. Then the ball curved easily over the middle of the plate and Mr. Munson cried "Three strikes—out."

Benny hurled his bat onto the ground in a rage and stalked away, while the crowd jeered and cheered. The next batter went out on an easy fly and the Scrubs came in for their final effort. Larry urged them to wait, but Moi Kee kept pitching straight to the

plate and the first batter went out on a long fly, cleverly caught by Finnerty. Sammy Blantin managed to reach first base while a grounder was being fumbled, and the next batter flied out just after Sammy stole second base. Larry came to bat with a chance to tie the score. The crowd cheered and urged him to hit, while opposing partisans shouted encouragement to Moi Kee. Larry decided that waiting was useless, and that he would hit the first good ball offered to him. The first ball came straight over the plate, looking, as Sammy afterward declared, "big as a watermillion," and Larry hit it with all his power and drove it straight back at the diminutive pitcher. Moi checked the force of the ball, and as it rolled on, he leaped after it and, whirling, threw to first base. His throw was low. Benny succeeded only in stopping it, and it rolled a few feet behind the base. Larry was sprinting to first at his best speed and Sammy, who had been running when the ball was hit, was on his way to the plate. Benny, pretending to be looking for the ball, jumped between Larry and first base. Larry cried a warning and attempted to swerve to





BENNY SENT HIM TWISTING AND FALLING

avoid a collision and as he turned aside Benny struck one foot in front of him, tripped him and sent him twisting and falling past first base. Before he could recover and dive back to base Benny had recovered the ball and touched him and Mr. Munson waved him out, ending the game.

Larry, shaken, hurt, and angry, leaped to his feet. His impulse was to spring at Benny and avenge the unfair trick. The recollection of another bit of Krag's sage advice came into his mind: "Lose gamely and without kicking. A game loser always wins, no matter what the score is." Instead of fighting, he ran to Benny, shook his hand, congratulated him and, gathering his team of yellow, brown, red and black boys around him, he gave a lesson in sportsmanship by leading three cheers for the victors.

CHAPTER IX

Choosing a New Team

THE success of the first game of baseball played on Shasta View ranch created intense interest throughout that entire section of the valley. The boys of neighboring ranches commenced to organize teams and within a short time talk of challenges was flying around and Larry Kirkland busied himself with the strengthening and reorganization of his regular team in expectation of harder games. The game between the Shasta Views and the Scrubs had shown them all that they had not made the best selection possible, as some of the Scrubs had shown that, while they might not shine so brightly in practice, they could play in real games.

Larry's one object was to get a team together that would be able to hold its own with the town team, and he was planning that, as soon as the Shasta Views developed sufficient

strength, he would issue a challenge to the town boys. He wisely decided, however, to bide his time. The town team would be composed of much older boys, some of them almost grown men, and it was too much to expect that a team composed of boys from fourteen to sixteen years of age, could hold their own with such a club. News of the game at Shasta View had been recorded in the *Pearson Weekly* and Larry found himself a celebrity. He cherished the newspaper clipping telling how he had organized the club almost as dearly as he had the clipping from the Portland paper, which had printed his photograph grouped with the Giants in the railway station. Major Lawrence was so pleased over the result of the day's entertainment that he declared a half-holiday for every other Saturday afternoon during the summer and fall, and urged Larry to go ahead with his plans for the team. The only drawback, from Larry's point of view, was the arrival at the ranch of Mr. Harkness, the tutor who had been employed by Major Lawrence to teach Larry during the summer in order that he might be ready to enter preparatory school

near San Francisco in the fall. Larry had studied sporadically since coming to the ranch, but he found it hard to tie himself down to lessons with all the joys of orchard, and river, and mountain at hand, and the ball club to occupy his time. The coming of Mr. Harkness made conditions still worse, for Larry had taken an instinctive dislike to the tutor, a tall, pale young man, who spent his time discussing literature with Miss Lawrence, and who did not believe in baseball.

The week after the initial game was a busy one for the young manager. He sent a full detailed account of the contest to Bill Krag, explaining every play he could recall, and asking the advice of his teacher on several points. Krag, after reading the communication to the Giant players, who were much pleased, summoned one of the reporters who traveled with the Giants and as a result there was compiled a wonderful letter, containing more valuable suggestions as to how the game should have been played, and how the plays should have been made, than any small boy ever before received. Larry was astonished to find that he had done the wrong

thing in almost every case, according to his advisors, who had exhausted their ingenuity trying to explain how the plays might have been made in other ways.

The team assembled for practice the same afternoon the letter was received and Larry read it aloud, explaining to the boys and asking for their comments. He said it was evident the team was not the best the ranch could produce, and that he was pitching only because he knew more about pitching than the others did and that he would be glad to give up that position as soon as they found a better pitcher. His offer to allow someone else to pitch robbed his statement of the sting of criticism.

The letter from the Giants had advised him to call for volunteers for each position and thus discover what place each boy thought himself fitted for, then to try out each boy in that position and choose the best. Candidates for any position could, if rejected, try for others and little Burton raised a laugh by solemnly declaring he intended to try for each one and then for mascot if he failed to make the team.

Larry called for volunteers for catcher and Sammy Blantin, Fred Memsic and little Burton applied, and in a few moments Sammy and Freddie were chosen and Burton, grinning, joined the ranks of those who wanted to be pitcher. Half the players of both the first and second teams claimed proficiency at throwing the ball. Larry summoned Chun to assist him in choosing three pitchers from the candidates, and to make the test fairer, he had each of the catchers catch each of the candidates and report to him and to Chun what they thought of the ability of each. Almost at the first glance it was evident that Benny Arnett was the best pitcher. He threw with an easy swing and a graceful sweep of the arm that was deceptive in that Benny put more power into his throw than he seemed to do, and without straining his arm. An even greater surprise was the showing of little Katsura, one of the Japanese boys, who, while not possessing much strength, had unusual control and a slow curve that puzzled even his catchers. Larry, having decided to eliminate himself as a pitcher save in emergencies, and to be a can-

didate for some other position, finally decided upon Moi Kee as the third pitcher.

Larry called the three pitching candidates together and gave them a lecture, telling them how to care for their arms, repeating to them the things Krag had told him. Benny Arnett was so flattered at being chosen for the most important position and by the praise of the other players, that he did not complain of being paired off with a brown and a yellow boy.

The three pitchers and the two catchers went to work with a will to practice and Larry called for candidates for first basemen. Half a dozen of the boys responded, and took turns fielding and catching. To the surprise of everyone Hanson, the big, stolid appearing Swedish boy, who only had been allowed to play on the second team because of his ability to hit, proved the best of the candidates. He seemed as surprised as anyone and kept repeating:

"Py Shorge, Ay ban tank Ah can play him."

Marotti, who had been the first baseman, was somewhat put out, but was advised to

try for one of the outfield positions, where his speed and ability to judge and catch fly balls would make him even more useful, and he agreed. Manuelo proved easily the best second baseman and Chun was awarded the short stop berth, although Larry, in the practice, proved about his equal. Chun wanted to surrender his position to Larry and to try for third base, but Larry urged him to play short-stop, as he intended to be a candidate for third baseman. There were only two candidates for the third base position, Larry and Finnerty, and Finnerty settled the question by declaring Larry was the better, and that he intended to try for the outfield anyhow as those ground hits hurt his shins when he was playing third. Finnerty had little trouble winning an outfield position, and the others were awarded to Nakyami and Marotti, although little Snow Eagle, the Indian, showed so well at catching flies that he was appointed first substitute, with Phillips, a big boy, who although a willing worker was a poor player, second substitute. The second team was chosen in the same manner—and little Burton turned a somersault in his gladness when

he was made right fielder of the Scrubs.

It was late in the afternoon when the re-making of the Shasta View team was completed, and the line-up announced as follows:

Nakyami, rf.

Marotti, lf.

Hanson, lb.

Kirkland, 3b.

Chun Moi, ss.

Manuelo, 2b.

Finnerty, cf.

Blantin and Memsic, catchers.

Arnett, Katsura and Moi Kee, pitchers.

The team seemed to Larry far better than the one originally chosen and the boys realized that they had strengthened themselves by readjusting the players and making a batting order after the ideas suggested by the big leaguers. In the letter sent by Krag the Giants had urged putting the small and speedy men at the top of the batting list, followed by the harder hitters, especially if they batter right-handed. Nakyami was small, a patient and clever waiter and skilful at bunting after he had mastered the trick, besides being a spry fellow, quick to start, and a

fleet runner. Marotti was the speediest runner of all and Hanson was the heaviest hitter, although slow of foot. Larry, next to Hanson, the best batter, had more experience and practice than any of the others. There was little to choose between the others, save that Chun was cunning and quick to learn and tricky. Larry was quick to see that, although his major league instructors had not mentioned the fact, it was good judgment to place Chun and Manuelo, both fast runners, just ahead of Blantin and Arnett, who, contrary to the accepted rule, could bat well even though they were pitcher and catcher.

It was determined to try the new team the following afternoon and Larry decided it was best to pit its full strength against the Scrubs and give the Regulars the benefit of working together. For five innings, Benny Arnett pitched and Sammy Blantin caught for the Shasta Views, with Katsura and Memsic as battery for the Scrubs. At the end of the five innings the score stood eleven to one in favor of Shasta View. Then the batteries changed, Benny and Sammy going to the second team while the Shasta Views took

Katsura and Memsic. It was rather unfair to Benny, as he was compelled to pitch two innings together without rest. In spite of Benny's best efforts the Shasta Views continued to score, although not so freely, while the Scrubs could not do much better against Katsura, backed by the Regulars, than they had done against Benny, and the game ended with the final score of eighteen to three in favor of Shasta View.

The result of the practice game proved to Larry that the difference consisted more in the support given the pitchers than in the pitchers themselves. He saw that the Regulars batted fairly well against good pitching. He was pleased to see that Katsura appeared to learn the finer points of pitching rapidly and that, even when he was being hit freely, he was cool and kept experimenting. The diminutive Japanese pitcher could muster very little speed, and he was neither strong nor possessed of the physique supposed to be necessary for pitching, but he had mastered a puzzling slow curve that proved hard to hit. It did not appear to curve much, and the batters found little trouble in hitting the ball,

but they could not drive it safe often and kept rolling easy bounders, chiefly to Katsura himself, who fielded with catlike agility. Larry had heard, during his brief sojourn with the Giants, that a curve, to be effective, should be pitched low and near the outside corner of the plate and he had told this to Katsura. At first the little Nipponese pitcher did not use his curve effectively, holding the ball so the batters could tell what he intended to pitch, but after a time the batters found his delivery harder and harder to solve. He struck Larry out on what seemed the easiest kind of pitched balls, and in the practice game he used his curve with great effectiveness.

After the game Katsura surprised Larry by stating calmly that he was mistaken about keeping the curve low all the time.

"I find, for myself," said the little fellow, "that my kind of curve is best pitched just inside the plate. The other curve, which makes the curve quickly and toward the ground, is best low and outside. Mine, I desire that they hit; the other is for them to miss."

In contrast with the cunning and scientific pitching of the studious little Japanese, was the speedy, brilliant pitching of Benny Arnett, who depended upon his speed and strength to accomplish his purpose. Benny had not fully mastered the curve, but his speed was so great that the Regulars had trouble hitting the ball, and when he pitched straight balls he possessed excellent control. He had been accustomed to throwing stones at birds and rabbits, often, too, at other boys, and he threw with great accuracy. His arm was strong and he could pitch an entire game without feeling the strain as the others did. His pitching in the test game showed great promise, and immediately after it was over Larry told him enthusiastically that he would teach him how to pitch a curve that would make him the best pitcher of all.

Major Lawrence had ridden past the field during the practice, and had invited both teams in the bungalow that evening. The Major knew nothing of Miss Sarah's act in forbidding the boys the house, and he issued orders to provide refreshments for them and

to arrange the great living room for their meeting.

Every boy was present at the meeting. Larry read the playing rules aloud, and distributed among them a dozen copies of the rules, for which he had sent to Portland, each boy agreeing to read every rule until he understood it thoroughly. During this discussion of the meaning of one rule little Burton, who always was in mischief, stuck a pin through the seat of Sammy Blantin's chair and Sammy's yell of pain followed by a dash at the culprit set the meeting into uproar. In the midst of the tumult Miss Lawrence, her face harsh with anger, stood in the doorway and shrilly commanded them to get out, and stay out, declaring she would not permit such conduct in her house.

The boys, guilty and sheepish, were preparing to make an exit and terminate the meeting. Larry, flushed with anger over the affront to his guests, faced Miss Lawrence defiantly. Fortunately, before he could speak an angry word, Major Lawrence came in from his study.

"Here, here," he said, frowning angrily,

"what's this all about? Sairy is right. You boys can't meet in her house, but you're welcome in mine, only, for pity's sake, leave the roof on and don't be upsetting Sairy's nerves."

Miss Sarah retreated, slamming the door, and the Major winked. The spectacle of boys of almost every race in the world, gathered under his roof on terms of frank equality, and enjoying themselves, pleased the democratic spirit of the Major. In a few minutes the house servants bore in great trays of sandwiches, cakes and fruit and the Major joined the boys, telling them stories of his own boyhood. At nine o'clock, when they dispersed, they stopped at the foot of the front porch steps and gave three cheers for Major Lawrence, who sat by the open fire in his study and wondered what "Sairy" would think.

CHAPTER X

A Crisis in the Team

MAJOR LAWRENCE, on the day following the meeting in the bungalow, prepared a surprise that redoubled the enthusiasm of the young players and marked an epoch in the life of the ranch. Miss Lawrence's protest against the assembling of the players in her own sacred precincts put the idea into the Major's mind and for several days he went around, smiling mysteriously and roaring and frowning at every boy he met as if he intended to snap their heads off. The youngsters had come to understand that while he scoffed and scolded and declared baseball to be all foolishness, he was at heart as much interested in the team and its success as were the players themselves. He berated them soundly for "wasting" four afternoons a week playing ball instead of working in the trenches or in the orchards, and, frowning, he told

them that when he was a boy he never did such things. Yet he was first to rush to their defense if any neighbor scoffed, and he openly declared that the Shasta Views could beat any team in the county.

For three days the teams practiced hard, and during this period the Major, scolding and urging greater haste, superintended a squad of workmen, and sent mysterious messages to Salem and Portland and San Francisco, and, on the fourth day, the wagon from town brought out more mysterious packages. There was hammering and activity in one of the big packing houses all morning and, as the boys finished their practice that afternoon and ran to change their clothes in one of the old sheds which they had been using since their expulsion from the bungalow, they were summoned to the large packing house. Major Lawrence greeted them and led them to the second floor, where they shouted with delight.

The entire second floor had been fitted up as a gymnasium, with a shower bath in one corner, a locker for each pair of boys, climbing ropes, pulleys, and baskets for basket-ball

and a diamond for indoor baseball. The corner room was fitted with a complete library of books of instruction of all kinds of sports, a big rough pine table, and some benches and pine chairs, quickly built by the carpenters.

The boys were at first almost stunned by the generosity of the Major and, when Larry finally recovered from his surprise sufficiently to attempt to thank him, the Major frowned angrily and said:

"Don't thank me, you young rascals. I only wanted to get you out of the house and keep you from ruining Sairy's nerves."

The possession of a real gymnasium, and dressing and meeting rooms, redoubled the interest of the ranch boys in the club. Those who had not tried to win places on the ball team came and joined in the gymnasium, and the room became the social center for the boys of the ranch. Even Benny Arnett seemed to join in the spirit of the team. At athletics he was a leader, and being stronger and more active than many of the boys, he took pride in his accomplishments. He even deserted Miss Lawrence save on occasions when he wanted to be petted.

Larry Kirkland was adhering strictly to the advice of his major league friends and refusing to "play favorites," or to allow any special privileges to any boy. He had been warned in a letter from Krag that the slightest favoritism would mean the end of discipline in the club. Two or three times he had trouble with Benny, who refused to obey the rules made by the Major for conduct in the club house, and once or twice they clashed on the ball field, but not seriously. Under the constant teaching of Larry, Benny had achieved an excellent fast curve, and coached by Sammy Blantin and Chun, both of whom had developed remarkable aptitude for baseball, he had become a more effective pitcher than Larry had been. Sammy was developing into a fine catcher, and he stuck close to the theory that all balls pitched should be over or close to the plate. Several times Sammy and Benny engaged in wordy disputes because Benny deliberately pitched fast balls when signaled to pitch curves. After the fourth or fifth offense of this kind Larry informed Benny that, unless he pitched to orders he could not pitch at all, explaining

that there was danger of hurting Sammy. Benny sulkily declared he had mistaken the signal, and the matter probably would have ended there had not Benny gone to Miss Lawrence with a story of being ill treated. Miss Lawrence, despite the Major's request that she cease interfering with the boys, had comforted him and pledged him her support and the support of Mr. Harkness in securing "fair play."

That afternoon the teams had arranged a practice contest, and to equalize matters and give the Shasta Views better batting practice, Benny and Sammy were to pitch for the Scrubs. Benny was swollen with his success and arrogant over the promise of support from Miss Lawrence and the tutor. He no longer objected to pitching for the Scrubs as he was filled with confidence in his own ability and delighted in seeing his team mates helpless before his speed and his new curve. On this day, however, it was different. Little Katsura, pitching carefully and studying each batter, was holding the Scrubs at bay. When they threatened to score he twisted his slow, easy-appearing curve, to the inside cor-

ner of the plate and they continued to drive up easy flies or roll the ball slowly to the infielders. Larry, coaching his team carefully, observed that Benny, proud of his curve ball, was using it persistently in spite of the signals of Sammy Blantin, who wanted him to mix the curves and fast balls so that batters would be kept in doubt as to which he would pitch. Three or four times Larry had seen Benny shake his head negatively and then pitch curves, so in the fourth inning Larry whispered to his players not to hit. They had been striking at wide curving balls, and their sudden change caught Benny unprepared. Two batters drew their bases because Benny's curve kept dropping low and outside the plate. The next batter sacrificed and Sammy, seeing defeat impending, signaled for a fast ball. Benny paid no attention and pitched a fast curve and the ball, curving low, escaped Sammy and rolled to the backstop, two runners scoring before he could recover it.

Sammy, thoroughly angered, ran down into the diamond, expostulating, and Benny sneered and accused Sammy of trying to

blame him for his own mistake. Larry, fearing trouble, ran to the scene, and said:

"Sammy signaled you for a fast ball, and you pitched a curve. Why don't you play right?"

"I won't take orders from a nigger," responded Benny sullenly.

Sammy, enraged, leaped upon him. Before Larry could interfere the boys were fighting fiercely in the middle of the diamond. The other boys rushed from their positions and the game was broken up. For several minutes Sammy forced the fighting, pummelling Benny, who had covered his face with his hands and was retreating. Then Larry and some of the other boys interfered and stopped the fight.

Larry knew that the regular meeting of the club, which was to be held that evening would be the crisis for the Shasta View club. He felt certain that Benny's first act would be to report to Miss Lawrence, and he feared that the report would be so garbled before it reached the Major that he might be ordered to disband the team.

Major Lawrence wore his sternest manner

at dinner that evening and he scowled and frowned through the entire meal, until Miss Lawrence and Mr. Harkness left the table. Then he turned upon Larry:

"Why can't you boys play without fighting?" he demanded.

"We can, usually," replied Larry, striving to keep his temper, which always flared out when the Major adopted that tone. "But one of the boys called another a nigger"——

"Called him a nigger, did he?" the Major snorted. "Throw him off the team. Don't let him play with you any more."

"But," protested Larry, alarmed at the idea, "he is the best pitcher we have. I don't want to put him off the team. I want to make him behave himself and work for the team."

"I have found," said the Major more quietly, surprised by the sudden change in his hot-tempered ward, "that if a fellow won't do the right thing because it is the right thing there is mighty little use trying to force him to do it."

"That's just the point," said Larry seriously. "I want Benny to see for himself that

he is wrong. I think if he sees he is wrong he will come and apologize to Sammy."

"You'll never bring that kind of a boy to do that," asserted the Major. "I know the breed. They don't apologize. The better you treat them the more chance you give them to hurt you."

"If he doesn't do it we will let him go. I won't beg him to come back if we never win a game."

"That's the spirit, boy," said the Major enthusiastically. "I don't know anything about this baseball foolishness, but I know a lot about handling men, and handling boys is the same thing, only worse, because they haven't learned sense. Either you've got to whip that boy good and make him admit that you're boss, or you've got to tempt him and let him come back without saying anything about the trouble."

"I can lick him all right," asserted Larry confidently, "but he won't fight fair. I guess Benny never had a fair chance. He is proud and he is too much of a coward to admit it when he is wrong. I'm sure he wants to play with us, but if he does he'll have to behave

himself and obey orders. Putting him off the team hurts him worse than licking him would do."

"Then all you ask is that he come back and agree to be good and behave himself in the future?" inquired the Major, much interested in the boy's ideas of right and wrong.

"Yes, sir. I don't insist upon having him apologize to the fellows if he will come out and act as if nothing has happened, and tell Sammy he will pitch right after this."

"Why don't you go and tell him that?"

"If I did he'd think that we cannot get along without him and that he can run the team. He has to come without being asked—or show that he is sorry."

"You leave it to me," snorted the Major. "I don't know whether he'll be man enough to admit he's sorry, but I've a plan that will make him sorry. I've had the idea in my head for several weeks and it is just the thing."

"Oh, please, what is it?" asked Larry eagerly.

"Can't tell you now. Wait until after the game Saturday, and when the boys come to

the club house I'll have something to tell them that will make them play ball harder than ever—and if it don't bring that half-breed to time I miss my guess."

Although Larry teased and teased he could not get Major Lawrence to tell him a word concerning the plan. The Major, after chuckling in a tantalizing manner half a dozen times, finally pretended to grow angry and ordered Larry to bed. He went to sleep wondering what new marvel of generosity his kind-hearted foster uncle had planned.

CHAPTER XI

The Major's Plot

THE Saturday afternoon game between the reorganized Shasta View team and the reinforced Scrubs drew another large crowd to the ranch. The news of the development of the team, and the success of the first game, attracted the boys especially from the entire valley, many of the boys from nearby ranches coming to watch the game and plan the organization of other clubs. The announcement of the game in the village paper brought a score or more of the young men and women of Pearton, who rode or drove out to witness the struggle and enjoy an afternoon at Shasta View, which in itself was a favorite outing.

The second team had been provided with uniforms, chiefly of home manufacture, and with Katsura pitching for the Scrubs and Moi Kee for the Regulars, the game proved an interesting and exciting one from the

start. Katsura was becoming more and more skilful in the use of the slow ball in pitching and Sammy Blantin, through steady practice and study of the batters, had come to know many of their weaknesses and was getting more wily in tricking them.

Up to the seventh inning of the game the Scrubs led by a score of four to two and it seemed as if they would overthrow the Shasta Views and win. The crowd was urging the smaller team on and applauding them at every move. Benny Arnett, still in disgrace with his fellows, skulked along the edges of the crowd, receiving scant sympathy from those who understood the circumstances of his suspension. Once he tried to offer advice to the Scrubs, and was scorned by little Burton, whose talk was as large as his body was small. The spectators who heard the diminutive darky tell Benny the Scrubs did not need any help from a "tuhn coht" laughed, and Benny, shamed, slunk away to the bungalow, where he joined Miss Lawrence, who was serving tea to Mr. Harkness on the porch. They extended warm sympathy to the boy, and both urged him not

to play with the "rude, rough boys." Between the sympathy and the cake and dainties Benny felt consoled.

The Shasta Views tied the score in the eighth inning, but in the ninth, in spite of some desperate fielding, the Scrubs made one more run. The diminutive Nakyami opened the Shasta View's ninth by pushing a perfect bunt toward third base and beating the ball to first base. Larry whispered to Marotti to pretend that he was going to sacrifice, but to hit the ball hard. Marotti crouched at the plate and gave every indication of intending to attempt to repeat Nakyami's performance. Of course the pitcher and first baseman of the Scrubs ran forward as the ball was pitched, expecting to field the bunt, and as they were advancing Marotti hit the ball so sharply past the first baseman's head that he had to dodge to escape being struck by it. The success of the strategy put the Scrubs in a panic and hits by Hanson and Larry followed quickly, sent two runs across the plate before anyone was out and won the game for the Shasta Views in a finish that set the crowd cheering.

The victory was of secondary importance to the players, however. Larry had told them of Major Lawrence's secret plan and as soon as Marotti crossed the plate with the winning run all the players raced at full speed for the club house. The two dozen boys, naked, wet, flapping each other with towels and struggling for places under the cold shower, were discussing the game in shrill tones, laughing and speculating as to the nature of the Major's surprise when the door to the club room opened quietly and the Major stepped in upon the scene.

Major Lawrence was as much pleased as they were, and almost as much excited over the outcome of the game. He had learned during the afternoon from his visitors from Pearton that baseball had made Shasta View the best advertised ranch in the state and that one of the Portland papers had printed a sensational story about the wonderful team the boys had developed in the foot hills. The reporter had few facts in his possession, but the Shasta View team had not lost any fame through that fact, as the reporter had declared them as good as the best professionals

and credited them with performing marvelous feats of batting and running. Highly colored as it was it did not seem that way to the Major, for to him Shasta View was the finest place in the world, and everything connected with it was better than anything its neighbors could produce. As usual, when he was feeling in the most joyous mood, he hid it by his threatening frown and his deep bellow.

"What's this? What are you doing?" he demanded in his gruffest tones.

Some of the youngsters who did not know Major Lawrence's peculiar methods of dealing with boys, half hid behind the others, and some looked around quickly for some avenue of escape. Most of them, acquainted with his dire threats that accompanied his kindest deeds, grinned. Sammy Blantin, who scores of times had fled from the Major's riding whip, which never had touched him, opened his mouth and exploded in a loud laugh, then subsided into wide-eyed silence as the Major glared at him.

"We thought you wanted us to meet you here, sir," said Larry, after waiting in vain

for one of the others to volunteer as spokesman.

"So I did, so I did," replied the Major, as if surprised and just recalling the engagement. "Let's see! What was it about? Dear me, have I forgotten?"

He paused as if thinking and put his hand to his face, then scratched his head, while the youngsters watched him in disappointed suspense.

"Oh, yes; I remember now," he said, after their hopes almost had died. "I had a little plan I thought you boys might like to help out on. Larry, will you open that window? It seems rather close in this room."

Larry hastened to comply, although the room was not close, the door and two other windows being wide open. As he threw open the window Larry's quick eye caught sight of a figure, pressed close against the wall of the building on top of a shed roof. With a quick suspicion Larry glanced toward Major Lawrence, and the Major, with an odd twist at the corner of his mouth, winked quickly at his ward. A grin of understanding spread over the freckled face

and Larry knew that the Major had caught a glimpse of the eavesdropper and wanted him to overhear what was to be said. He had not seen the face of the eavesdropper, but he felt certain it was Benny Arnett, anxious to find out the purpose of the meeting.

"It is this way, boys," said the Major, raising his voice. "You fellows have been working hard and faithfully, at least most of you have, trying to improve yourselves and to win glory and honor for Shasta View ranch. It is a good thing for each one of you and a good thing for the ranch. We never have had amusements enough around here to bring us together to get acquainted. It is a good thing for all you boys to learn while you are young to work together for the good of all. Larry tells me that what wins in baseball is teamwork—each boy forgetting himself and working for the team, and that is exactly what wins in a ranch, or a mine or in business. If you learn to work together in a baseball game, you'll learn to work together when you grow up and go into businesses for yourselves.

"I was thinking that you boys have earned

a little vacation and besides I've been wanting to take one myself. Fourth of July falls on Thursday this year and I thought that maybe all you boys who have played on the teams and all the substitutes who have been ready and anxious to play, would like to go camping up in the Park"——

A murmur of surprised delight, followed by a rustle of excitement interrupted the announcement. Then someone started a shrill cheer, and Finnerty, bolder and quicker than the others, sprang to his feet and cried:

"Three cheers for Major Lawrence."

In spite of the Major's scowls and his threats to drive them all out of the club room and not take them camping at all, the cheers were given, then more cheers and laughter and excited clamor, and it was five minutes before the excitement abated so that the Major could be heard.

"We'll start Wednesday before the Fourth," he said. "We'll take the roundup tents and the cook outfit and get the camp pitched by Wednesday night. Then we can have a baseball game Thursday afternoon and another on Saturday, if you want to

play, and we'll come down the mountains Sunday afternoon"——

The applause broke again and continued until the Major stormed and threatened and pounded the table with a bat to restore order.

"If you're going to act like a band of Apaches we won't go," he threatened. "I just wanted to add that Larry, being manager of the team, will give me the list of the names of the boys who are to go. I hope he chooses only the boys who have worked hard and faithfully for the sake of the teams, and leaves out all the loafers and sulkers. Now get out, and leave me in peace. You needn't ask me any more questions. You've wasted enough of my time now."

The kind-hearted autocrat scowled savagely and glared at little Burton, whose eyes were rolling and his face betokening anxiety. Burton could not keep still.

"Is yoh gwine to take niggahs, too, Major?" he blurted out, and the Major, exploding with laughter, lost his frown, and the boys joined in the shout of laughter. Suddenly the Major became sober.

"Boys," he said seriously, "I'm glad little Joe asked that question. There are no niggers, or Japs, or Chinamen, on this ranch. It is not the color that makes a man, or a boy. It is honesty, self-respect and cleanliness."

The Major's seriousness silenced all the boys, and they fell to discussing the promised expedition. Larry felt sorry for Benny Arnett. He knew Benny must have heard every word the Major had spoken. He knew why the Major had placed the power to take or leave any boy in his hands. He knew how bitter Benny must feel to know that he either must miss the camping trip, or sue for forgiveness.

The place of which the Major had spoken as "the Park" was the great natural park of the Crater Lake National Reservation, far up in the Cascade Mountains that overshadowed the ranch. Not one of the boys ever had been on the high Sierra, but all had heard stories of the wonderland in the skies, of the beauties of mountain and forest and the marvel of the sapphire lake set down between giant cliffs of granite so high that, from the edge at some places the water

scarcely can be seen. The prospect of camping out four whole summer days in such surroundings was enough to make any boy wild with anticipation.

The practice Monday afternoon started early. Every boy was on hand at least half an hour before the time set, eager to talk of plans for the camping trip, each with plans to suggest.

Larry Kirkland was busy at the table, chewing a lead pencil and preparing the list of names of the boys who were to go. The smaller ones crowded close to the table in their anxiety and jumped with joy when they saw their names recorded, and the larger ones, pretending security of feeling, tried to appear indifferent as they inquired "merely to make sure he hadn't left them off accidentally." Larry folded the list, placed it in his trousers pocket and followed his players toward the diamond. Near the edge of the orchard he saw Benny Arnett, sitting with his back against a tree, pretending to be indifferent to the shouts and cries coming from the field, and apparently watching a bird in a treetop nearby.

"Hello, Benny," said Larry casually.

"Hello," responded Benny sulkily.

"Hurry and get into your uniform," said Larry. "Better get a hustle. It's nearly time."

Benny, surprised out of his pretended indifference, stared at him and hesitated.

"I—I— Am I——" he stammered.

"Sure," said Larry quickly, relieving him of his embarrassment. "Hustle up and get your uniform on and when you're pitching after this watch Sammy's signals. You might break his fingers pitching what he doesn't expect."

"I—I'll be careful," promised Benny, as he whirled and raced as fast as he could to the club rooms. Within ten minutes, panting, and hot from rapid movements, he ran onto the field and said:

"Come on, Sammy. You catch me. I'll watch your signals."

When Major Lawrence opened Larry's list of names that evening he sat staring at it for a long time with a pleased smile on his face.

**"He'll do," he muttered. "He's all right."
The cause of his pleased expression was
that Benny Arnett's name led all the rest.**

CHAPTER XII

The Camp in the Mountains

TWENTY-FIVE boys, scrambling, shouting, calling orders and turning everything into confusion, were striving to assist two men in the work of pitching camp. Major Lawrence, sitting upon a pile of boxes, fussed, fumed, scolded and laughed alternately. The cook tent already was in position, securely staked down, and the stores and stoves were in place. A quick-footed Japanese boy was jabbering excitedly as he assisted the calm and unperturbed Chinese cook in starting the fires for cooking supper.

The two slow-appearing and quick-achieving men who had brought the two great wagons, each drawn by four horses, up the final stretch of trail from the railroad, were the only ones of the Shasta View party with the exception of the imperturbable Chinaman who did not seem at all excited. Their lives

had been spent in camp, and on the mountain trails. They wasted not a movement or an ounce of effort as they unloaded the wagons, stowed the beddings, arranged the blankets and ditched and prepared the ground around the tents. Boys seemed everywhere—white, brown, yellow, black and red, scrambling, scurrying, dragging up firewood for the night's campfire, sorting out the blankets and trying to assist while chiefly succeeding in getting in the way of the men, who made every move count. Occasionally one of the mischievous ones attempted to snatch a bite of food from the newly opened boxes of supplies and fled before the brandished skillet of the Chinaman or the chattering threats of the little Jap.

It was nearly five o'clock and the sun was sinking lower down over the great valley, almost ready to touch the tips of the hazy, far mountains along the coast and plunge down into the Pacific Ocean. To the southward, shining now with a steely white glare and seeming closer than ever, the cone of Shasta towered, making the great mountains of the range seem like pigmies.

A few hundred yards from the grassy opening in the forest chosen as the site of the camp, the mountain side ended abruptly and dropped through dizzying distance to the lake. The camp was on a level glade, which once had been a little shelf on the slope of "Old Mazuma," the mightiest mountain of America, perhaps of the world, until, eaten out by internal fires, the great cone had sunk in ashes. The mountain had swallowed itself and, instead of the majestic cone that had risen to overshadow Shasta and Hood, there was a hole which, slowly filling with the icy water of the snows, became Crater Lake.

The spot chosen by the guides as the site of Shasta View camp, was two miles to the southward of the trail by which sightseers usually climb to visit this wonderland in the skies. It was a wide, grassy glade, as smooth and well kept as if in a city park, while all around, save to the west, the playground was fenced in by great forests of the wonderful Oregon fir, giant redwoods, and occasionally an oak or commoner tree. To the west the mountain side sloped sharply, so that the boys could look out over the tops of the lower for-

ests and see the rolling plain of the Rogue River Valley spread like a patchwork quilt of greens and browns to the hazy horizon near the foot of the Coast Range.

Major Lawrence had, in deference to his twinges of rheumatism, consented to have a cot provided for his own use, but the boys were to sleep rolled in their blankets. To many of them this was not a novelty, but to Larry the idea of sleeping on the ground was new, and he was greatly excited. It was agreed that the players composing the first team should roll their blankets along one side of the big tent while the second team players and substitutes were on the opposite side. There were mysterious whisperings even before the tents were pitched and plottings that promised a great pillow fight between the rivals. The sudden remembrance that they did not have pillows seemed to spoil the plot until one of the insurgents discovered that a blanket, rolled into a long roll and doubled, makes an excellent substitute for a boy's natural weapon of bedroom warfare.

It was half after five o'clock before the arrangements for the night were made and al-

ready the Chinese cook, assisted by the speedy little Nipponese waiter, was preparing the supper. The veteran mountaineers had staked out the horses for the night and, with the Major, were leaning against trees, smoking, telling tales of old days in the Sierra and laughing at the antics of the boys.

As soon as the camp duties were done, Larry summoned all hands to lay out the baseball field in the wide mountain meadow. He had learned a simple way of laying out a baseball diamond and playing field without the use of surveyor's instruments, but he never had tried it and was eager to make the attempt. He had prepared for it before leaving the ranch by borrowing a long steel tape used in measuring the ranch orchards and fields. An extra fly from one of the tents was quickly stretched upon high stakes driven in the ground for use as the backstop and, from the center of this canvas backstop Larry, calling one of the boys to hold the end, ran out and stretched the tape upon the grass. He counted off 217 feet 3½ inches, at which point he told Chun, who was following with an axe and stakes, to drive the stake

marking second base. Ninety feet from the backstop he drove another stake, and set the boys digging up the ground to imbed the heavy board which he had sawed into the shape of a home plate. Without moving the tape, but keeping it taut to the second base stake, he marked a place between 150 feet 6 inches, and 150 feet 10 inches, and ordering the boys to dig again, he planted the pitcher's plate in position.

Major Lawrence and the two guides, all of whom knew the practical field work of surveyors, were watching with much interest the performance of the youthful engineers. Not understanding baseball they were a little mystified by the various measurements, and Major Lawrence remarked quietly to the guides that the boys would get in trouble when they attempted to establish the angles of the diamond. Larry measured to a spot 153 feet 7½ inches from the backstop and on a direct line from the home-plate peg to the second-base peg, and drove another stake there. Then he brought the steel tape up to the home plate, ran down with it 90 feet toward the first base position, and measured

63 feet $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches to the stake last driven. He found that, by stretching the tape until the line from the home plate was 90 feet, and the line from the 153 feet $7\frac{1}{2}$ -inch stake was 63 feet $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches, he had a true right angle and there he drove a stake marking first base. In a moment he had carried the line over to third base, boys holding the tape at the home plate and the stake in the center of the diamond, and staked out third base. With the exception of measuring and marking off the minor lines the diamond was accurately laid out and the angles perfect.

Before he had completed this amateur surveying the other boys were at work, chalking straight lines down from the home plate to first and third bases and extending the lines straight out to mark the foul boundaries and back from the plate to mark the lines of the catcher's position. Fifteen feet from the first and third base lines and parallel with them they marked the coacher's boxes and completed the task by chalking squares six feet long, six inches from each side of the home plate, establishing the position of the batters.

Under the direction of Larry the boys drove the base stakes deep into the ground, until the top was level with the dirt, and driving staples into these they tied the canvas bags filled with sawdust firmly in position. One boy had found an old bucket, another had borrowed a big pan from the cook. In these a lime wash was stirred and two boys, walking along the hastily chalked lines, poured the mixture upon the marks, and, as the lime dried, the lines became white and the field was clearly marked out. Other boys working like beavers, using hands, feet or any implement they could find or improvise, were removing the rough spots. They were working without system until Larry commanded the player and substitute for each position to work on their own territory, putting the extra substitutes to work making the infield as smooth as possible.

Major Lawrence watched the activities of the swarm of boys with interest and some surprise. The plan of laying out the field was not at first clear to him, nor did he feel quite certain that Larry knew exactly what he was doing. But as the whitewash dried and the

perfect geometrical form of the field was revealed, he realized that the boys had accomplished, with only a tape measure, a feat that the best surveyor could but equal. The two guides whistled with surprise at the exactness of the work. All of them had had experience in running lines for mining or for timber claims and they realized clearly the value of such practical training for boys—especially for Western boys.

Major Lawrence, walking out to inspect the work, congratulated the boys cordially upon their accomplishment. The work scarcely was completed before Sun Lee, the cook, stood just outside the cook tent and beat with an iron spoon upon the bottom of a dishpan to summon the hungry crew to supper.

The meal was served upon cloths spread upon the grass of the glade, because, in their haste to lay out the baseball diamond the boys had forgotten to erect the wooden table, and the guides did not consider it a necessity.

The supper call was answered by a wild rush and scramble. The Major generously overlooked the clay-stained hands, and, although after the scramble for seats had sub-

sided, he ordered hand inspection, he showed his sympathy for boys by passing even those who had been grubbing in the earth with their hands.

The tin spoons clattered upon tin plates and the spry Nipponese boy, grinning at the voracious appetites of the boys, ran back and forth, heaping the beans, the smoking Johnny cake and the chunks of boiled meat upon the ever-emptying plates. Coffee was forbidden to all save a few of the youngsters, but the Chinese and Japanese boys drank prodigious quantities of tea. After the boys, with sighs of contented weariness, leaned back upon the grass, cakes and fruits were served. The men lighted their pipes, the Major his cigar, and when the dishes and cloths were whisked away, the boys and the elders reclined in groups upon the soft grass, watching the red glow of the sun fading in the west.

CHAPTER XIII

The Major's Story

THE sun was sinking red behind the far away mountains that border the ocean and shut off the cold and rain of the coast from the valley. Already the shadows were falling heavily upon the lower slopes of the Shasta range. The tops of the western mountains seemed rimmed with fire, and, high above the darkened valley and slopes, the tip of Shasta shone, brilliant, as the last rays of the sinking sun touched it, as if bidding it farewell until the dawn.

Knowing the rapidity with which night comes along the Pacific, the guides were heaping dry wood upon the campfire, which leaped and crackled and threw shafts of red that pierced the deepening blackness of the fir forest, and sent wierd shadows dancing on the treetops. The cooks clattered away at their dishwashing, chattering in a mongrel language which both understood. The boys,

squatting Indian fashion, gathered closer and closer in a circle around the fire. The guides and Major Lawrence sat together, the Major, fearing the dampness of the ground, using an empty box for his chair. They talked of other camps, in the heart of the Rockies, on the wide plains, in the snowy wastes of Alaska, in the desert; of nights on the range and the faraway times when they heard war whoops of savages. It was a series of wonder stories to the boys. The spell of the purple, starry night, the campfire and the odor of the forest seemed upon the men, and presently the Major, stretching out his arm drew Larry close to him.

"It seems strange to me to be sitting here to-night with this boy," he said, running his fingers tenderly through Larry's stubborn shock of hair. "When I look at him I sometimes get all mixed up, and wonder whether I am a boy again, or whether I have grown old and my chum has grown a little younger. This boy's father and I came West together when we were scarcely older than you boys are to-night. I was not twenty then, and he was just eighteen. I met him in Dodge,

which then was the great station on the cattle trail from the West and Southwest, and we became acquainted. We were both bound West to make our fortunes—and for nearly ten years we were pals, in trouble and danger and everything. He was as much like this boy as two persons can be—only not quite so quick tempered or ready to quit a pal.”

He pinched Larry’s ear teasingly and Larry flushed in the firelight, understood that the Major was slyly scolding him for his determination to run away at the time of the trouble with Benny Arnett.

“We agreed there in Dodge to stick together and divide,” he went on, “and we never broke the agreement. Whatever either of us had belonged to the other, and it was always so while we were together. Half a dozen times we were near fortune, and finally we found it.

“I was thinking awhile ago, while Lacey was telling the story of his gold mine, of a night that we camped in the mountains not far from here, and what came of it.”

The Major paused for a time, smoking while he gazed into the fire as if conjuring up

the scenes of that other night of which he spoke. Then, turning, as if telling the story to Larry alone, he went on:

"Your father and I had been in hard luck," he said. "We had been prospecting all summer, from the time the snows went off the higher mountains until late fall. For, no matter what we did to earn our living, neither of us ever was entirely cured of the gold fever. We knew that, some day, we would find a mine that would make us rich.

"We had been at it all summer. Our grub was low, but we had plenty of fresh meat for the killing. We had scratched gravel and washed dirt, had prospected outcrops and I guess we had scratched about half the surface of the Siskiyou. There wasn't anything to worry about, as he wouldn't starve to death so long as we had ammunition, salt, and matches, and we were always sure of work if we would come down to the valleys, but the prospect of coming in for another winter with nothing to show did not please us.

"You understand those mountains to the south and southwest are full of gold, but it

isn't gold that a fellow can take out with a pick and a pan and get rich. We found plenty that would pay big money if worked on a big scale. It was the fifth year we had put in together, mostly in prospecting, and somehow the failure that summer seemed worse than all the others. We were discouraged.

"The snow held off longer than usual in the high places, but we were ready to go down to the valley with the first heavy fall, and one night we camped way over west of Shasta there. We had been examining an outcrop that showed fair traces of gold that afternoon and sitting around the fire, just as we are now, we talked it over. We decided it wasn't much use to look further that fall, but that we would camp right where we were, examine that ledge carefully and see whether we could follow the ledge upward. It seemed to us to tilt in rather a peculiar manner, even for that country where the rock strata is so changeable. It was my turn to cook breakfast in the morning, and while I was making the coffee I yelled for him to bring a bucket of water from the spring. He did not reply,

and I started to get the bucket and bring the water myself. The bucket was gone and I yelled to Charlie to bring it, for I heard him up the hillside, he didn't reply and I went up after him, wondering what was the matter. He had dug under that slanting strata of gold-speckled rock with his pick and made a hole in the gravel, and was washing gravel in the hand basin. I started to call him names for taking all the things that held water away so I couldn't make coffee and he said: 'Jim, all the gravel under this ledge is alive with gold, and there isn't a bit of gold in the gravel above it.' "

Major Lawrence stopped to relight his cigar.

"Well, we knew what that meant. I dropped the coffee pot and we scratched and washed gravel there until nearly noon before we remembered we hadn't had breakfast. There wasn't any doubt about it. There was plenty of gold—one of the richest placer propositions I ever saw. After we ate, Charlie said: 'Stay and scratch. I'm going to have a look upstairs.' He always called the higher mountains upstairs. It was nearly

dark when he got back, but he was pleased, and after he had eaten he told me that there was plenty of water over on the next mountainside, nearly four hundred feet higher than our ledge, and that it could be piped down, across the valley and would give us enough head of water to wash the whole hillside away. He figured the pipe could be built cheap, cheaper, he said, than any he ever had seen. All we needed was fifty or sixty thousand dollars working capital and we could sit and watch hired men shovel gold dollars into our pockets.

"We went down into the valley that night. We went to Salem, then to Portland. Our claim and papers all were filed. All we needed was money. I had a friend at Portland who, I believed, would finance the thing and take a chance with us for a share in the mine. His name was Barney Baldwin."

The guides glanced at each other knowingly and some of the boys seemed surprised.

"Yes," continued the Major. "It is the same Barney Baldwin who owns the Rogue River ranch. You've all heard how I hate him and this is why.

"We found Baldwin. He had made his money in saloons and gambling in the earlier days, and what he called a 'brokerage office.' I thought him square. He agreed to supply the money for a one-third interest. He got up a lot of stock subscription papers, and organized a company, elected both of us to offices, and we held a meeting and went through some rigamarole which he said was necessary. Then he filed the papers at the capital.

"Neither Charlie nor I paid much attention to anything. Baldwin advanced money and gave it to us, and we placed orders for pipes, rams and machinery. Then we left everything in his hands, arranged for the shipment of the pipe and stuff for the early spring, and went back into the mountains. We finished up a cozy log cabin near the ledge, brought in the winter supplies and we wintered there. We felled the trees and cleared the line for the pipes, working in snow waist deep at times. We slid the logs down to use for carrying the pipes across the valley. We were crazy to start getting out the gold, and we had the sluice box half com-

pleted before the workmen commenced to come up and bring in the pipes on sleds.

"One night we had a campfire like this. Baldwin had come in to see the mine, he said. We sat around and talked of what we would do with our riches. Charlie was going back home and get married. I was going to travel all over the world and eat five meals a day. After a winter of elk meat, bear meat, deer meat and salt pork a healthy fellow wants civilized cooking.

"Baldwin went away the next morning on a sled. Just as he started he handed Charlie a bundle of papers and said, 'Read these when you get time.' Charlie tossed them onto the table and that evening he read them. I heard him curse, and then he read them to me. They were notices to vacate and legal warnings that we were trespassers upon the property of the Lucky Ledge Mining Company. Baldwin had betrayed us. We found that the papers we signed gave him the power of attorney to act for us, and he had sold the mine to a fake company, organized by himself, for a song, just enough to let the old company pay for material and machinery.

The old company was insolvent. We had nothing."

Major Lawrence patted Larry's head tenderly. The boy was gazing at the fire, his face set and bitter at thought of his father's wrongs.

"It meant five years more of hunger and exposure and work. It meant two years in Alaska, years of suffering and hardship. I could forgive that, but it meant that it cut shorter the life of this boy's father. It was in Alaska that the exposure weakened him and he never was strong again."

Suddenly the Major shook himself and started to his feet.

"Here, here," he demanded sharply. "What's this? Staying up all night listening to an old man's yarns? Get to bed."

The fire had died to embers during the telling of the tale and the black shadows were creeping closer and closer. The Major's command roused several of the boys who had dropped asleep during the recital. The sudden breaking of the spell sent the boys scurrying to their places. The guides prepared for bed by knocking the ashes out of their

pipes and rolling into their blankets. The boys subsided in their places.

Larry Kirkland could not sleep. He was thinking of the tale Major Lawrence had told, and he was hot with passionate desire to avenge his father's old wrongs. He had seen Barney Baldwin, a great coarse man, driving around the valley during the spring, and had heard Major Lawrence hated him. He knew, too, that Baldwin, although owner of great wealth in the Pacific Coast states, lived most of the year in the East, and was considered one of the great political powers of one of the greatest cities in America.

Larry was just beginning to fall asleep when a whispering and giggling on the opposite side of the tent caught his ear. He lay still and listened. The whispering and rustling continued and he discovered that the Shasta Scrubs were cautiously rolling their blankets into weapons for a night assault upon the Shasta View team. He jabbed his elbow into the ribs of Flaherty, who was sleeping next to him.

"Don't make a noise," he whispered. "The





THE FIGHTING SPIRIT OF THE MAJOR WAS AROUSED

Scrubs are getting ready to jump us. Wake Sammy quietly and roll your blanket."

Half a dozen of the Shasta Views were awakened and prepared for the attack when the Scrubs, learning their surprise was in danger of failing, leaped to the assault, swinging their blanket rolls upon the heads and shoulders of the sleepers. Larry, Sammy and those who were prepared rallied in one corner and strove to repel the attack. Shouts, cries, thuds and howls filled the night. The big tent shook and swayed as the struggling boys reeled against the side walls. Major Lawrence, wakened from sound sleep, sat up dazedly, only to be buried under his cot and bed clothing.

The fighting spirit of the Major was aroused. Calling down anathemas upon the young roisterers, he seized upon his pillow and, bellowing threats, he waded into the deep of the meleé, wielding his pillow with terrific effect. His superior weapon told. Every blow sent boys bowling over against their comrades or diving under the flaps of the tent to escape. In three minutes both teams were in full flight, save the few boys

who huddled in corners and begged for quarter.

"There," said the Major. "There, consarn you, I'll teach you to disturb an old man's sleep."

And as he righted his cot and crawled back he was chuckling.

CHAPTER XIV

The Game Above the Clouds

THE boys were aroused from their slumbers by a terrific explosion, followed by a bombardment, that brought them springing from their blankets imagining that Old Mazuma was caving in again. They rushed from the tent to see the clearing filled with smoke just as the final explosion of the salute to the Fourth of July shook the glade and set the echoes reverberating through the forest.

The morning salute was another surprise arranged by the Major, who had ordered the guides to bore great augur holes into the body of a fallen giant of the forest. These holes had been filled with powder, fuses attached and set off for a twenty-gun salute. Before the smoke had cleared away, four boys, among them a Japanese and a Chinese boy, seized the ropes and ran up an American flag to the top of the pole in front of the big

tent, and the boys, waving hats and cheering, saluted Old Glory.

Refreshed by their sleep in the vigorous air of the high altitude, and excited over the cheerful start of the great day, the boys raced down to the little stream that gushed, icy cold, from the mountainside spring, to bathe their faces and hands in the clear water. Fires already were crackling, the horses had been fed and the cooks were busy in their tent, from which the appetizing odors of breakfast already were coming.

The chill of the morning air was penetrating, but it sent the blood tingling through the veins and set the boys running and jumping to keep warm. Heavy layers of cloud and fog obscured the lowlands. The valley in which their homes were situated lay as if under a sea, and boys looked down upon the fleecy billows of cloud, gazing upon the silver lining, while those below saw only the darkness of a threatened rain storm. Above them Shasta towered in its greatest magnificence, the snow cone lighted by the brilliant sun, while heavy clouds shut off the lower part of the mountain, making it appear as if the

great white peak stood upon the clouds themselves. Birds sang in the trees, and the breeze set the giant fir trees to whispering among themselves.

At breakfast, which was served on the long table of boards that the guides had erected before the boys were stirring, by simple process of driving stakes in the ground and nailing boards upon them for both table and seats, the Major growled and declared the young ruffians had ruined his sleep. To judge from his activities, however, he was years younger than he had been when he marshalled his cavalcade for the trip up the mountains. He seemed as young as the boys themselves, and after breakfast offered to run a race with little Burton, who refused, saying:

"Tain't fair, you's older'n Ah am."

Breakfast over, the boys performed the regular camp tasks, policed camp, hung their blankets on lines in the sun to remove the damp of the night, and were free to go where they pleased.

All were eager for a glimpse at the wonderful lake at the bottom of the crater and,

led by the guides, they hurried through the forest to the edge of the cliff. They saw huge walls of stone, many colored and beautiful, rising mountain high in places, as if some giant hand had split the range. Crawling to the edge of the sheer precipice, they peered down half a mile to see the lake. To their amazement it still was night on the surface of the water, although the sun was an hour high and rising over the higher mountains. Peering downward they watched the marvel of a second sunrise, as the sun's rays slowly broke through the fogs that hung over the surface of the lake, and presently, shining through them, revealed the wonderful blue of the water in the depths.

Some of the boys closed their eyes and drew back shuddering from the brink of the precipice when they gazed into the dizzy depths. Others, more daring, sat upon the edge and dangled their legs over the abyss with no thought of giddiness until ordered back by the Major.

The entire morning was spent strolling along the rim of the crater, the boys exclaiming as each view of the lake revealed new

wonders. At noon they raced back to camp for their lunch and for a long, lazy rest on the grass of the glade in preparation for the game.

The game above the clouds that afternoon perhaps was the strangest game of baseball ever played. The clouds that gathered heavily below them indicated that in the valley the Fourth of July celebration was being spoiled by rain while at their altitude the boys romped in warm sunshine. Major Lawrence viewed the clouds with complacency, and remarked that the people in the valley would not care much about the spoiling of the celebration, as they needed rain badly for the growing crops.

Larry was determined to make the game above the clouds the best yet played by the teams. During the morning he called Benny Arnett and Sammy Blantin and asked them to be the battery for the Scrubs against Katsura and Memsic for the Shasta Views. Larry explained tactfully that it was because he wanted to give the Scrubs a chance to win that he chose Benny to pitch for them.

Before the game there was a long debate

as to the umpire. In his preparations for the game, Larry had thought that he had made provision for everything, and to his dismay he discovered that he had forgotten all about an umpire. It seemed that no one could be found who knew the game. Major Lawrence refused firmly and stormily to attempt the task. Loo, the Japanese waiter, coming from his dishwashing, heard of the plight, and volunteered. The boys scouted the idea, until Loo informed them that when he was at school in San Francisco, he had sometimes officiated as umpire, and he was greeted with cheers.

From the start of the first inning it was evident that, for the first time, the Shasta View team had its task cut out for it if it was to win. Benny Arnett was pitching in his best form. His fast ball smacked into Sammy Blantin's mitt with a crack that indicated the force that was behind the pitch, while his curve ball seemed to dart away from the bats of the regulars as if dodging them. He seemed to have perfect control, and pitched wherever Sammy signaled him to pitch. Larry realized after the first in-

ning that Benny had been practicing hard during the days he was sulking and that he had practiced throwing his curve until he had learned to control it. Katsura was pitching well, and the regulars were giving him excellent support, but the Scrubs had improved in their batting and, as both Benny and Sammy were good hitters, their batting strength was greater than it ever had been, and they kept the Shasta Views working hard to prevent them from scoring.

Three innings passed and neither team had been able to get a man around the bases. The shouts of the coaches and the cries of the boys as they urged each other on to greater efforts attracted the attention of a party of sightseers who were passing around the rim of the crater, and they gathered in the shade at the edge of the forest to watch the unique contest. A tally-ho load of Easterners joined the spectators and were made welcome by the Major, who extended the freedom of the camp to them. These were followed by several camping parties, and finally by a group of excursionists who had come up to spend the Fourth on the heights, so that, by the fifth

inning, a ring of spectators sat on the grass under the shade of the trees and cheered the boys.

The fifth inning found the score unchanged and Benny pitching better than ever, so well that he had balked every plan of attack evolved by Larry and Chun, who in vain strove to bunt, to wait for bases on balls and to hit the ball. Only two of the Shasta View players had managed to reach first base, and one of these on an error. The Scrubs, meantime, were batting Katsura's slow twisters rather freely, but the brilliant defense of the Regulars kept them from reaching the final goal. Twice they ruined their own prospects by getting caught on the bases. Katsura had developed a deceptive balk motion that spelled woe to anybody who took too great a venture off the bases. Once a fast double play, executed by Chun and Hanson, prevented the Scrubs from scoring. It was clear that only luck and sharp fielding were saving the Shasta Views from defeat.

In the last half of the fifth inning, Meheegan, notoriously one of the worst batters on the Scrub team, surprised himself and every-

one else by hitting a safe fly over Hanson's head. Snow Eagle, the speedy little Indian brave, drove a long two-base hit to center, and his feat was greeted by war whoops by the spectators, who by that time were cheering each of the boys after the manner of his nation. There were "banzais" for Katsura when, rallying and using his slow curve, he struck out the next batter. To the Easterners especially, the sight of boys of all nations playing America's national game under such surroundings was of great interest, and they cheered impartially and "roasted" Loo for some of his decisions.

The next batter hit hard at one of Katsura's slow twisters and popped up an easy fly, which Larry caught near the foul line, and it looked as if the Shasta Views had again escaped luckily. The next instant Sammy Blantin set the crowd in an uproar by hitting the ball so far out over Marotti's head that the ball fell onto the sharper slope of the hill and, gathering speed, rolled so far that he had circled the bases before it was recovered. Benny followed with another

home run, almost to the same place, and the crowd applauded vigorously.

With the score 4 to 0 against them the Shasta Views had an opportunity to display their courage under trying circumstances. They had been fighting hard to avert defeat, and with the score against them they redoubled their efforts. Larry was thrilled to find that not one of his players showed any sign of being discouraged, nor did any of them seek to blame another. They cheered, shouted, encouraged each other, and in the sixth inning, by aid of an error, they managed to score one run. In the seventh a base on balls and Hanson's long hit scored two more, and it looked as if they might, even then, turn the tide; but in the eighth their hopes fell, for, after two were out, Sammy singled and Benny drove him across the plate with a long hit down the third-base line.

The score was 5 to 3 against Shasta View when they went to bat in the ninth inning. For the first time Larry was tasting the bitterness of defeat and, strangely, he did not find it half as unpleasant as he had expected. He remembered what Krag had said about

"game" losers and fighting to the finish. Katsura struck out, being helpless before Benny's curve. Nakyami, cool and resourceful, twisted, dodged and tantalized Benny into giving him a base on balls. Marotti struck out, but Hanson revived the waning hopes of Shasta View by hitting a two-bagger, the third clean hit Shasta View had made off Benny's excellent pitching.

With men on second and third, Larry faced Benny, the entire result depending upon him. He was determined to wait until Benny gave him a straight ball, and Benny was determined not to do it. He curved one over the plate for a strike, then pitched two wide ones. Larry braced himself. He felt certain the ball would be straight and fast. It was, and he met it squarely with all his strength behind the swing of his bat.

The ball sailed high and far out to left center, and the spectators broke into a cheer. If the ball got past the fielders it would fall onto the steeper slope and roll on for a home run, turning the entire result. Snow Eagle was sprinting at top speed across from center field. As the ball was sailing over his head

he sprang and stuck out one hand. The ball struck his hand, wobbled an instant, then his fingers clutched it and, although he fell and rolled and turned a somersault, he came to his feet with the ball clutched in his fingers.

For an instant the crowd was silent, then, realizing what had happened, a wild outburst of applause waked the echoes of the forest. Martin, one of the guides, fired his revolver six times into the air. Snow Eagle, still holding the ball, a smile of pride on his face, ran toward the diamond. Before he reached second base the other boys were shaking his hands, shouting their praises, and finally, at the pitcher's plate, they formed a ring around him and danced a war dance, with war whoops that would have made a warrior smile.

In the midst of the celebration of Snow Eagle's great feat, Larry seized Benny's hand.

"Great game, Benny," he panted. "You deserved to win. Pitch that way all the time and we'll never lose."

He pushed Benny into the ring with Snow Eagle and the war dance around them con-

tinued until the boys, exhausted from whooping and laughing, threw themselves upon the grass and listened to the laughter and applause of the spectators.

CHAPTER XV

A Challenge and a Desertion

SHASTA VIEW ranch looked peaceful and restful to the boys when they came down from the heights of the cascades Sunday and reached the home ranch just as the sun was sinking. The odor of flowers, the incense of alfalfa and growing crops after the rain, was welcome, and the warmth and gentleness of cultivated ground was pleasing after days in the mountain wildnesses.

The camping expedition had proved a glorious success. Days spent in exploring forest wildnesses, climbing mountains, an expedition to the edge of the snows and the descent to the lake by the one possible path had kept them busy. There had been one feast on trout caught by the guides, who, taking four of the boys, led them to a gushing brook far across the range and brought home a great string of beauties. Another baseball game on Saturday had given the Regulars

their opportunity for revenge, and they won it easily by a score of 9 to 2.

The boys had cast lingering looks of regret around as they broke camp and packed their blankets for the trip down to the end of the railroad. Three of them, anxious to prolong the joys of camp life as long as possible, had remained with the guides and the wagons, preferring to make the entire homeward trip with the wagons rather than board the train at the end of the line and ride down.

By Monday morning all the boys were at home on the ranch, and Larry spent the morning reading a letter from his friend Krag and composing a long reply, in which he told the incidents of the trip, giving full details of the two games played above the clouds.

There was one piece of ill-luck that befell the Shasta Views in the week after their return from the camping trip. Marotti, the speedy Italian youth, fell ill and could not play. Snow Eagle, partly because of his sensational catch in the game on the mountain, partly because of his fleetness of foot, was

given the position, although he was not as good a fielder or batter as Marotti.

Larry was preparing his team for games with other clubs, and was becoming impatient because no challenges arrived from the rival ranches when one came from an unexpected source. The challenge was delivered at the bungalow by a messenger on horseback, who had orders to bring an immediate reply. It read:

ROGUE RIVER RANCH, July 11.
Manager Shasta View Baseball Club.

Sir: You are hereby challenged to play a game of ball for the championship of the county next Saturday afternoon. As we have not yet finished our diamond, we will come over and play you there if you accept the challenge.

Yours truly,

HENRY T. BALDWIN.

P. S.—We haven't much of a team. We've just organized, and some of the boys are little kids.

Larry read the note with a worried expres-

sion upon his face. The mounted messenger, who had ridden over to bring the note, was waiting for the reply. Larry had little time for consideration. He knew that Major Lawrence entertained a deadly hatred for Barney Baldwin, father of the boy who had sent the challenge, and that he would not permit any dealings between the people of his ranch and those connected with Baldwin's Rogue River ranch, which was nine miles away on the opposite side of the river. Until he heard the Major's story in the mountain camp, Larry did not understand this bitter hatred, because Major Lawrence was not a man to hold a grudge against anyone. Larry realized that this was defiance from the son of the man who had robbed the Major and his father and compelled them to spend five more years of their lives in hardships while he grew rich and powerful from the gold washed out of the mine they had found.

"I will write the reply," he said to the waiting horseman. "Wait here."

He went to the Major's office and rapped upon the door.

"Rapping is a relic of barbarism," said a

stern voice. "The ancient Romans tried scratching and found it no more satisfactory."

Larry waited. Then realizing that the Major would not bid him enter, he pushed open the door.

"Uncle Jim," he said; "I'm in trouble again."

"Don't be bothering me all the time about that ball team," roared the Major, frowning forbiddingly. "Haven't I wasted enough time?"

"Yes, sir," said Larry, bristling as he always did; "but this is different. I've received a challenge"——

"Accept it. Don't let 'em say you refused to play."

"But, sir; it's from the Baldwins at Rogue River."

The Major turned apoplectic and stared at Larry.

"I won't have it!" he thundered. "I won't have any of that breed setting foot on Shasta View."

"Yes, sir," replied Larry. "I'll write them that. We won't play them."

"You won't do anything of the sort," roared the Major. "I won't have any of that crooked breed saying we are afraid of them."

"Yes, sir," said Larry, with puzzled meekness. "I'll write them we'll be glad to play them—and beat them."

"You won't"—the Major roared. Then he stared at Larry and sat thinking.

"You want to play them, don't you, boy?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Larry firmly; "I'd like to play them, and beat them."

"They're a crooked crowd," said the Major. "Don't trust them. The boy may be all right, but I doubt it. If he has lived under his father's influence, he'll cheat. You've got to beat 'em—understand?"

So Larry, still worried, wrote, accepting the challenge, and hurried out to assemble the team to break the news of the coming game to them. He knew that the news would revive the interest of the boys in the work, but he was worried. This game the team must win, no matter what happened. He knew the Major would feel defeat at the hands of his ancient foe bitterly.

The boys hailed the news with great enthusiasm. Larry did not tell them of the added reason for desiring to defeat the invaders. He feared that the information might make some of them nervous. He ordered practice for every day of the week.

The weather had turned exceedingly hot, and playing baseball on a sandy field in such heat was not pleasant, yet the boys set to work with a will. During the hard practice sessions the only complaints heard were from Benny Arnett, who really worked less than did any of the others. On Tuesday afternoon Benny merely threw the ball a few times then loitered in the shade of the trees watching the others. The next afternoon Benny pitched a few balls and again retired to the shade. Larry watched him for a time, hoping he would voluntarily come out and join the others, and finally called:

"Oh, Benny, come on out and pitch to batters."

"I don't feel like it. It's too hot," replied Benny, rolling over in the grass.

The defiance was so open and so flagrant

that Larry flushed under his coat of tan, but did not renew the argument.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, when Larry reached the bungalow late in the afternoon, hot, tired and worried, he found Benny Arnett sitting on the cool porch with Miss Lawrence and Mr. Harkness drinking iced lemonade. The sight made him angry, and to increase his indignation he heard Miss Lawrence say, evidently for his especial benefit:

"I wouldn't play with them, Benny, unless they treat you fairly."

"No, indeed," assented Mr. Harkness. "They are rude, rough boys and scarcely fit associates for boys of finer sensibilities."

Larry longed to turn and express his opinion, but continued on his way fighting with his temper.

He found a letter awaiting him, and threw himself upon his bed to read the advice from Krag, which, oddly enough, seemed to bear directly upon the present situation.

"If I were you," Krag had written, "I would watch that pitcher. From what you tell me, he is the kind not worth having, no

matter how well he can pitch. We have that kind in the big leagues; fellows who must be patted on the backs all the time and told they are the best in the world in order to make them pitch well. We find that kind of a fellow usually is a quitter when he gets into a tight place. I would rather have a player not so good who is willing to work and who keeps his nerve in tight places.

"The little Jap you told me about must be a wonder. I wish I could be there to see him pitch. Tell him from me that those slow benders of his are the best things in the world if he has any speed at all to mix up with them. Tell him to practice his fast ball until he learns to pitch it with the same motion he uses in throwing his slow twisters, or to change his motion for the slow ball to the same he uses in pitching fast. Tell him to keep his fast ball close to the handles of the bats, and his slow curve well in the same way, but when he pitches his curve fast, to keep it down and to throw it sidearm when he wants it to come over the plate. They'll be more likely to hit it into the air. If he has nerve enough to use his curve when the bat-

ter has the advantage of him on balls and strikes, he will do."

Larry was delighted with the advice to Katsura. He knew the little brown fellow would wriggle with joy at being picked out for especial mention by the famous pitcher.

Krag's advice about Benny Arnett troubled Larry. He knew it was right, yet, with the game against Rogue River ranch at hand, he dreaded losing the services of Benny. With Benny pitching, he felt certain the team could win, and he doubted Katsura's ability. He had small hopes that Benny would be manly enough to attempt to make amends for his loafing. Indeed, he believed that, supported and encouraged by Miss Lawrence and the tutor, Benny would be more arrogant than ever, especially as he would believe Shasta View could not do without his services in the coming game.

Larry had a hard fight with himself there in his room. He wanted to win the game, for his own sake and for the sake of Major Lawrence, but he could not sacrifice his principle even to win. He arose after a time and walked slowly out into the orchard. He had

arrived at one conclusion. He would give Benny Arnett one more chance. If Benny did not come out and practice faithfully the following afternoon, he would drop him from the team and send Katsura to pitch against the Rogue River ranch team—even if he lost.

The young manager was anxious and worried when the boys, bubbling with excitement and enthusiasm, gathered for practice the following afternoon. Every boy of both teams was present, and even Marotti, who was convalescing, was there to watch and encourage the others. Benny came, as usual, dressed with the others, and ran with them to the ball field. Larry hoped he had experienced a change of heart, but, after he had batted a few balls and pitched languidly for a short time, he retired to the shade of the pear trees and, throwing himself upon the grass, lolled at ease watching the other boys working and perspiring in the heat. Larry was fielding around third base. For ten minutes he waited patiently for Benny to return to the field. Then he called:

“Oh, Benny, come on and pitch to the Regulars. We need batting practice.”

"Too hot to pitch to-day," responded Benny indolently, without a movement to arise.

Larry tossed his glove to one of the substitutes and walked over toward the pitcher.

"Come on, Benny," he said loudly, so that the others might hear. "It isn't fair for you to be loafing while all the rest of us work. Get out and pitch. You need the practice for Saturday's game."

"I'm not going to work like a nigger out there in the sun," responded Benny sullenly, as he raised himself on one elbow.

"If you don't practice to-day you cannot pitch Saturday," warned Larry, striving to keep his temper.

"If I can't pitch Saturday I'll quit the team entirely. I won't be treated this way," complained Benny, sitting up and scowling angrily.

The boys gazed at each other for an instant. Larry was fighting his fiery temper and striving to keep cool. Benny flushed angrily, stared straight at the young manager—then his eyes fell.

"All right," said Larry quietly. "Leave your uniform at the club house."

He turned away and trotted back toward his position.

"Hi, Katty," he called to Katsura; "Benny has quit the team. You'll have to pitch Saturday. Come on and we'll practice."

CHAPTER XVI

'Katsura Finds His Speed

BENNY ARNETT'S defection from the ranks of the Shasta View team created a commotion among the young players. Larry Kirkland, worried and troubled, entertained one great fear, and that was that the sympathies of some of his players might be with the pitcher he had summarily disposed of in his effort to enforce discipline and avoid favoritism. He knew that, if any number of the boys aligned themselves with Benny, or believed themselves ill-treated, the future of the team was dark, and the outcome of the game with Rogue River ranch Saturday worse than doubtful.

When the players completed the practice and trotted back to the club room, he noticed that the boys were strangely quiet and that they avoided speaking of the scene of the afternoon. Whether their silence meant sym-

pathy for Benny he did not know, but he decided that the quickest and best way to find out was to ask them while they all were together.

"Well, fellows," he said, "it looks bad for the team with Benny out. What do you think of it?"

For a moment no one replied, then Chun said angrily:

"Benny alle samee big fool. Allee timee think him too good. When boy get too good he no good."

Chun had a habit of lapsing into Pidgin English when he was excited or angered, although ordinarily he spoke English clearly, and there was no doubt now about his anger. His outbreak of indignation ended the reticence of the others, and they voiced their views with considerable vigor. Larry was surprised and relieved to find that every one of the boys who spoke stood with him and strongly against Benny. He learned, too, that for several days the others had been murmuring because Benny was permitted to loaf while they worked, and that, in a manner, the summary disciplining of Benny had

been a good thing in relieving the discontent.

He listened to the outbursts of indignation on the part of the players with considerable comfort and renewed hope.

"Well, fellows," he said, "if we all feel that way about it, we will win anyhow. After all, it isn't the one player who makes a team. If we all work together and help each other they can't beat us."

He spoke more confidently than he felt. At heart he was troubled through fear that Major Lawrence would disapprove of his act in dropping Benny from the team on the eve of a contest that meant so much to him. It was not that he doubted the justice of the Major, but he feared that already he would have heard another version of the story, for he felt certain Benny would carry the story of his expulsion to his friends at the bungalow. He thought bitterly of his previous forgiveness of Benny, and decided that, instead of being grateful to him, Benny probably cherished the idea that Major Lawrence had intervened and ordered him to be taken on the camping trip.

Larry approached the bungalow hesitatingly, undecided as to whether he should broach the subject or wait for Major Lawrence to speak of it. Major Lawrence, Miss Lawrence and Mr. Harkness were at dinner, having just seated themselves when Larry entered. Miss Lawrence gave him a glance that made him fear the worst. The Major chided him lightly about being late, and he and Larry discussed the happenings of the day while Miss Lawrence and Mr. Harkness talked of the lack of culture in the West, as compared with New England, with special reference to the "lack of finer sensibilities" among the people and their coarseness of manner. Miss Lawrence occasionally glanced at Larry to add point to her words, and the Major snorted, but maintained silence, and Miss Lawrence sniffed. Between the unfriendly glances Larry became uneasy and blundered with his food, whereupon Miss Lawrence, with an air of hopeless resignation, reproved him for lack of table manners. It was to his intense relief that she and the tutor presently withdrew from the table and left Larry alone with his foster uncle.

"I understand," the Major remarked presently, and without the stern frown with which he usually opened such conversation, "that you had trouble in the baseball team again to-day."

"Yes, sir," replied Larry quietly. "I hate to trouble you any more about it, but I was waiting for a chance to ask your advice."

"Can't you run the team without fighting?" asked the Major lightly.

"Not when I have to fight or let someone else run it," replied Larry firmly.

"What was it all about?" asked the Major. "Sairy was trying to tell me that you have been picking on poor Benny again."

"I've dropped Benny from the team." Larry's announcement was made in lower tones, but his voice was firm. He expected an outburst from the Major, but none came. The Major laid aside the paper he had picked up, stared at Larry curiously and seemed puzzled.

"You have, eh?" he asked finally. "What for? Isn't he your best pitcher? Do you want to get beaten?"

"No, sir. I wanted to win. I understand

how you would have felt to have the Baldwins beat us—and I wanted to beat them because of what—what they did to you and father; but I had to do it.”

The Major was plainly interested. He leaned forward, studying the lad.

“Tell me about it,” he said kindly.

Larry gave him a brief account of Benny’s rebellion, of his refusal to practice with the other boys, of the many chances he had been given to correct his ways, and of the final scene when Benny openly refused to work. Major Lawrence listened without comment.

When Larry finished, he arose, walked to the fireplace, turned his back to the fire and parted his coat tails with his hands and took the attitude in which he felt at ease while talking.

“It was the only thing to do, Larry,” he said. “I am proud of you. If you had permitted him to dictate, you might as well have quit the team. I’m beginning to think this baseball is a good thing. These little worries and troubles are just like the big ones you’ll have later in life. You’re learning to deal with others and to lead men. As for los-

ing the game Saturday, win it if you can. If you cannot, then remember it is a bigger victory to lose for the sake of principle than to win by sacrificing it."

"The boys all think I did the right thing," said Larry, much relieved. "I wanted to lick Benny for the way he acted, but it seemed better just to drop him."

His aggrieved tone pleased the Major so much he threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"I guess licking him won't do any good," said the Major. "You won more respect from the other boys by acting as you did and showing them you can keep your temper and treat all alike. Run along now, I'm going to have it out with Sairy. She is always getting things twisted. She believes everything that boy tells her, and she encourages him. I'll speak to her about it."

"Please, Uncle Jim," Larry begged, "don't tell her how much we need Benny."

"Would you take him back?" asked the Major, to test the firmness of his young ward.

"Yes," replied Larry slowly, "if he would

apologize to the whole team, but not unless he does it without being ordered to do it."

"I'm afraid he isn't the kind of a boy to do that," said the Major. "He lacks moral courage."

He was proud of Larry's development of character and of executive ability, but he refrained from further comment, in order to study the boy and see how he worked out his own problem.

The Shasta View players worked harder than ever through the next two afternoons preparing for the game. Larry told them that Major Lawrence was more anxious than he ever had been for them to win from Rogue River ranch, and, although he did not mention it, enough was known of his feud with Barney Baldwin to show the youngsters that he believed the honor of the ranch rested upon them.

Benny Arnett passed through the orchard several times during the practice sessions, but not one of the players paid any attention to him. He evidently was offering Larry every opportunity to invite him to come and pitch, but, finding himself ignored, he betook

himself to the house. To his astonishment and consternation Miss Lawrence would not receive him. What Major Lawrence had said to her the boys never knew, but Benny found himself cut off from her sympathy and, feeling much abused, he went away.

On Friday afternoon one of the Shasta View ranch cattlemen who had been riding across to Rogue River on business stopped and watched the Shasta View boys practicing.

"You'll have to work hard to beat the Rogues to-morrow, boys," he said. "They've loaded up for you. Young Baldwin has a bunch of his friends visiting him, and they're bigger than you fellows are."

The discovery that Harry Baldwin had deceived them regarding the strength of his team did not frighten the Shasta View boys. It angered them and added to the element of personal animosity. It did not seem fair to them that Rogue River should import players, and Larry, when he learned the worst, called the boys together and told them.

"We'll beat them anyhow," said Chun. "Bigness isn't everything."

"Yaas, Ay tank we win," said Hanson solemnly. "Ay golly, we ban play gute."

"We'll have a good chance if Katty pitches well," said Larry. "I'm going to stay and catch him awhile. You fellows can knock off practice now. There's lemonade and cake waiting at the club room. Uncle Jim sent them down for us."

The boys raced away, hastening to their shower bath and the refreshments, which were welcome after the hard work in the hot sunshine. Larry remained with Katsura catching while he coached the little Nipponese pitcher. Katsura was proud of his position as pitcher, and the praise of Krag, in his letter to Larry, was sweet. He had worked hard to accomplish the trick advised by the famous pitcher. He had learned to pitch his fast ball and his slow ball with the same motion, but, try as he would, he could not make the ball attain any great speed, nor could he make his curve break quickly.

"If you only had some speed to use with that slow ball," groaned Larry. "Try hard. See if you can't throw harder."

Time and again Larry pleaded with Katsura to throw harder, but he could not.

"Let me show you," he said finally. "I can't do it myself, but I'll show you how Mr. Krag pitches."

He took the ball from Katsura and attempted to imitate the manner in which Krag, the famous pitcher of the Giants, "wound up" before throwing a ball. He swung his arm far back, pivoted his body on his right foot, whirled so as to get all the force of body, arm and the momentum of the swing behind the ball at the last moment. Katsura was watching him closely.

A smile quickly flashed over the earnest little brown face.

"I have it," he said quietly. "It is the same as our men of Nippon threw the lance in the old days. My father taught me when I was a baby."

He took the ball, stepped into position and, with an easy natural swing of the arm, body and a final crack of the wrist as he released the ball, he sent it whizzing toward Larry. The ball sped to the mitt with more speed than Katsura ever had shown.

"Fine," yelled Larry in his enthusiasm. "Try it again."

Again Katsura pitched, throwing sidearm, and the ball came more speedily than ever.

He tried pitching his curve and, to the astonishment of both boys, the ball curved sharply just before it reached the plate.

"That's the stuff," Larry yelled. "You've got it. Keep it up."

For ten minutes more they practiced.

"Don't tire yourself," said Larry. "Save your strength for the game."

"It is easy," said Katsura calmly. "Often I have thrown the lance that way, as my father showed me, but I never thought of throwing a ball that way."

Larry was smiling happily when he came to the bungalow.

"How does it go, Larry, boy?" asked Major Lawrence.

"We will win," said Larry confidently. "Katsura has learned to pitch."

CHAPTER XVII

The Game with the "Rogues"

LARRY KIRKLAND'S confident prediction of victory would not have been quite so confident had he waited until the Rogue River ranch team arrived, shortly before noon the following day. One glance showed that the visitors were much older and larger than the Shasta View boys.

Larry and his players had gathered to welcome the visitors, for the Major declared that Shasta View must receive all comers with courtesy. The big wagonette in which the Rogue River team had made the trip across the valley drew up with a flourish in front of the bungalow and a swarm of boys of from fifteen to nineteen years of age sprang out. The youngest player was Tom Conklin, who was past fifteen, and the oldest, a tall young man of nineteen or more, who was introduced as Wallace, the pitcher. Larry strove to conceal his indignation over the manner

in which he had been mislead. He had known that Harry Baldwin was almost eighteen and had played on a preparatory school team near San Francisco in the spring, but the challenge had led him to expect boys from the ranch exclusively.

"Your fellows look bigger than ours," remarked Larry to Harry, after the introductions, as he strove to do the honors of the ranch in fitting style.

"I had a couple of the fellows from school visiting me," replied Harry easily. "We didn't want you to lick us too badly, so we wrote to a couple more who were visiting over near Medford to come and help us out."

The unfairness and deceit aroused Larry's indignation, but he concealed his agitation and ushered the visitors into the bungalow. He observed that, while the majority of the Rogue River boys shook hands and seemed pleased to meet the Shasta View players, Harry and one or two of his schoolmates ignored the colored and the yellow and brown boys and took few pains to conceal their contempt. After Larry had ushered the visitors into the rooms in which they were to dress

for the game, he sought out Major Lawrence.

"What's the trouble now?" demanded the Major, frowning fiercely as Larry burst in upon him. "Haven't I enough worries without being troubled about this baseball foolishness?"

"I'm sorry," replied Larry rapidly; "but there is something more I wanted to ask you about. Baldwin made us think he had a team made up of ranch boys. Now he has filled up with his school friends and they are all older and larger than we are; some of them are almost men."

"They are, eh?" said the Major, bristling angrily. "That's a regular Baldwin trick. That boy must be just like his father."

"But what shall we do, sir?"

"Do?" snorted the Major. "Do? Why confound it, lick 'em! Beat 'em good! Fight 'em! Show 'em they can't run over you, no matter how big they are! Confound it, I wish I was forty years younger, I'd show 'em."

"We'll fight hard," replied Larry. His lips were set in a straight line, his blue eyes

flashed with determination, and Major Lawrence smiled proudly as the boy marched out.

Larry compelled himself to be polite to his guests during the luncheon, and he escorted them to the club rooms to show them the gymnasium. He found some of the boys likable and friendly, although he distrusted and disliked Harry Baldwin, who viewed everything with a disdainful sneer and compared it sneeringly with the "outfit at school."

The game was to be played at three o'clock and, by agreement, Mr. Munson, who had driven over from his ranch, was chosen to umpire. The Shasta View boys were very quiet while they were donning their uniforms. Larry told them of the deception practiced upon him by Harry Baldwin. He pleaded with them to fight hard, no matter what the score was and never surrender until the last man was out. He read them what Krag had written about "gameness," and when he led his little band out onto the field, he felt assured they would fight to the finish.

The crowd was the largest that ever had assembled on Shasta View ranch. The news of the game and the knowledge of the rivalry

between the two ranches and the enmity of the owners created much interest, and ranchers and their families from all over the valley came to see the game. The two guides who had been with the boys on the mountain called to them. Larry was wondering whether Barney Baldwin, the man who had robbed his father and Major Lawrence of a fortune, would be there. During the practice of the visitors he overheard someone say:

"There is Baldwin now."

A buckboard, drawn by two lithe thoroughbreds, was just swinging into the line of vehicles, and Larry, glancing across, saw a large, heavy-jawed man, red of face and cold of eye, jerk the horses back almost to their haunches. He gazed with a new disgust and hatred upon the man who, the Major had said, had cut short his father's life. Then he noticed that someone was riding with Baldwin. At the big man's side he saw the daintiest, prettiest little girl he ever had seen. She was about eleven years old, slender, fair, and her mass of light hair was blown around her flushed face by the rapidity of the ride. She tossed the fair hair from her face and

clapped her small hands as one of the Rogue River boys made a nice play.

"That's Baldwin's little niece," remarked one of the ranchers standing near the Shasta View bench.

A moment later Larry led his boys out to practice and forgot the golden-haired girl and everything else, save that Shasta View must win.

Instead of insisting upon the right of the home team to choose, Larry courteously offered to toss a coin to decide choice of whether to bat or take the field first, and he considered it a good omen when he won the toss and sent the visitors first to bat. Disaster came in the first few minutes. The big boys from Rogue River fell upon little Katsura's pitching in the opening inning, and it seemed as if the game would be a landslide. They batted home three runs, and before the fast curve pitching of Wallace, the preparatory school pitcher, the Shasta View boys were helpless. In the second inning the visitors filled the bases, but Katsura, pitching as coolly as if in a practice game, twisted his slow curve up to the plate, varying it by using

his new-found sidearm fast ball, and managed to prevent them from scoring.

Between innings Larry pleaded and begged that his players quit swinging vainly at Wallace's fast curve, urging them not to hit until forced to do so, and to wait for a base on balls.

"He is working hard," whispered Larry. "He is pitching all he knows how to pitch. If we make him work he'll tire and we'll get some runs."

The second inning passed and still not one of the Shasta View boys had reached first base, and three of them had struck out. The only sign of hope that Larry could see was that Katsura had settled to his task and was pitching more and more effectively. His peculiar swinging motion, in which he used his entire body, had stopped the heavy hitting of the visitors. Occasionally one of the visitors hit the ball to safe ground, but the strike-out record of the little Nipponese pitcher was growing, and behind him the team, spurred by Larry's constant encouragement, was playing steadily and without a sign of panic.

In the fourth inning, Nakayami, crouching

over the plate, bunted the ball quickly toward first base and was over the bag before the surprised first baseman had reached the ball. Snow Eagle was hit by a pitched ball and, with a grunt of mingled pain and satisfaction, he trotted to first base. Swanson was ordered to bunt, and Larry realized he had made a mistake when the big fellow popped an easy fly to Wallace, and Snow Eagle, who was running when the ball was hit, was doubled before he could get back to first base. It seemed as if Shasta View's opportunity had been lost; but Larry, fiercely determined, hit a hard bouncer past third base that sent Nakyami scurrying across the plate with their first run.

The one run that served to encourage Shasta View but a moment, for in their half of the fifth inning the visitors fell upon Katsura's curve and, aided by a long hit by Mossler, one of the school friends of Harry Baldwin, they made two more runs and raised the score to 5 to 1.

Larry, coming off the field hot and flushed at the end of the inning, glanced toward the Baldwin buckboard and saw the big man

gloating as he glanced toward Major Lawrence. The little girl was clapping her hands, and Larry somehow wished she would not do it, but applaud for Shasta View.

At the bench Larry, squatting in front of the players, watched Wallace.

"He is tired, fellows," he said in a low tone. "Manuelo, you bunt the first ball that comes over the plate. Finnerty, you do the same. We'll try it this inning and see if we can worry him. Crowd close to the plate and try to bunt toward third base. I think they are weak there."

He did not know why he said that, for Harry Baldwin was playing third base, and he had not shown any evidence of weakness. Manuelo was not allowed to bunt, for Wallace, having struck him out twice in the game, tried to do it again and gave him a base on balls instead. Finnerty pushed the first ball pitched toward third base and Baldwin failed to field it in time. An instant later Sammy Blantin drove a hard hit past second base and Manuelo scored. The Rogues, as the crowd called them, were in panic, and before they had a chance to rally,

Katsura bunted toward third base and Harry Baldwin rushed forward, seized the ball and hurled it high over the first-baseman's head. Before the ball was recovered two more runners had crossed the plate and Katsura was on third. He tried to score on Nakyami's slow boulder to the first baseman and was thrown out easily at the plate, wrecking Shasta View's hope of tying the score. The inning ended with the score 5 to 4 in favor of the visitors, but Larry and his players were more hopeful and fighting harder.

As Larry ran out to his position he saw the big man in the buckboard talking angrily to his son, who had stopped on his way from third base. The little girl seemed on the point of tears, and, in spite of his rejoicing over the rally, Larry felt sorry for her.

Shasta View's high hopes dimmed in the sixth when Katsura failed to hold his opponents and they scored one more run. The seventh inning passed, with neither team able to gain any advantage, and the score, when the eighth started, was 6 to 4 in favor of Rogue River, Shasta View's outlook seemed dark.

Wallace still was pitching well, but it was evident the strain was telling upon him. He seemed to require a greater effort to pitch his fast curve, and at times he lost his speed entirely. He hit Finnerty to open the eighth inning for Shasta View. Larry, seeing an opening for another rally, whispered quickly to Sammy Blantin. The colored boy nodded, grinned understandingly and trotted to the plate. He crouched as if intending to bunt toward third base. The Rogues, warned by previous experience, expected another bunting attack, and, as he pitched the ball, Wallace sprang forward expecting to field a bunted ball. Instead of bunting, Sammy hit the ball hard and sent it whizzing past the pitcher's head and on to center field for a single on which Finnerty reached third base by hard sprinting. Katsura strove hard, but Wallace rallied and struck him out. Nakyami, tricky and resourceful, swung his bat as if intending to hit the ball out of the field, then pushed a slow bouncer toward the shortstop and before any of the fielders could reach it he had crossed first base and Finnerty was safely over the goal at home.

Evidences of disorder commenced to reappear in the ranks of the Rogues and Snow Eagle added to their panic by pushing a bunt toward first base. Lucas, the first baseman, and Wallace collided in fielding the ball and all the runners were safe and the bases full. Hanson, the quiet first baseman, had struck out twice swinging at wide curves, and this time Larry pleaded with him to let the curves go and try for a base on balls, unless he could get a fast ball that suited him. The clumsy fellow nodded. He let two curves sweep wide past the plate, then bracing himself he met a fast ball and hit it with terrific force. The ball sailed far out to left center and before it could be retrieved three runners were over the plate and for the first time Shasta View was in the lead.

The Major, forgetting dignity, was waving his hat and cheering.

Larry decided to force the attack while the visitors were in panic, and he hit the first base safely, sending Hanson home, and, taking advantage of the demoralized condition of the Rogues, he stole second on the first ball pitched. Chun Moi came to bat grinning,

and as he looked toward second Larry motioned to him to bunt the ball. As the ball was pitched Larry was in full flight for third base. Chun pushed the ball down toward third base and Larry, turning third base, raced up the line right behind Harry Baldwin, who was frantically striving to field the ball. When Baldwin threw vainly to first, Larry raced past him and scored without trouble before Lucas, the first baseman, could make a throw to catch him at the plate.

With the score 9 to 6 in their favor, Shasta View took the field for the ninth inning confident of victory. The first batter for the visitors went out on a long fly to Snow Eagle and Larry's heart was light. The next batter singled, and Larry commenced to worry a little because Keyes, who was at bat, was one of the best hitters on the visiting team and he had been driving the ball far and hard each time he came to bat. Larry's heart gave a throb of joy as Keyes swung and sent a slow, easy boulder rolling toward him. Too eager to clinch the victory Larry fumbled the ball and lost the chance. The error seemed to disturb Katsura, and a sharp hit sent one

of the Rogues home and another to third. Larry, despite his own error, was coaching, pleading with Katsura to steady himself for the supreme test.

The little Nipponese responded gallantly. He was using his body throw again, and although another run scored on an infield play, the batter was out and the game seemed safely won until Lucas sent a long double crashing to right center. Before Snow Eagle could return the ball, runners were on second and third and another safe hit meant that the visitors again would be in the lead.

Harry Baldwin was coming to bat. He was smiling and filled with confidence and as he came he smiled toward the buckboard, as if to say, "Watch me win it now." The little girl clapped her hands.

Larry ran over to Katsura.

"You've got to put him out," he said. "Use the fast curve first, then the slow curve. He will hit at anything."

The little brown fellow nodded gravely. The first ball he pitched he threw with all the force of his whirling arm and body, and his "javelin curve," as Larry had called it,

swerved six inches from the end of Harry Baldwin's swinging bat.

"Good boy, yaller boy," yelled Sammy Blantin in glee. "He cayn't hit dem wif a board."

He signaled for the same curve again, but Katsura quietly shook his head. Using the same terrific whirling motion of body and arm, he sent a slow curve twisting toward the plate. Harry swung viciously and missed the ball a foot. The crowd yelled in glee and Harry turned red with anger.

Larry, his nerves on edge, ran to Katsura again.

"He's mad," he said. "Be careful. Don't pitch him a good ball. Pitch two fast ones, way outside the plate, where he can't reach them."

Again Katsura nodded and with the same motion he sent two fast balls high and far from the plate. Each time Harry Baldwin started to hit, but held his bat back. The tally was two strikes and two balls. Katsura stepped off the pitching slab and motioned to Snow Eagle to move further back in the out-field. Then he waved to Finnerty to go out

farther. Then he stepped back to the slab and faced the batter.

Harry Baldwin, watching Katsura impatiently, took a firmer grip upon his bat. He believed that Katsura was going to pitch a fast ball straight over the plate and that, knowing he would hit it, the pitcher had ordered the outfielders to move back, hoping they would catch the ball on the fly. Katsura took a final glance around the field to see that the players were in their positions, then, as if straining every muscle of his body, he made a frantic movement of his body and pitched. Harry Baldwin saw the ball coming straight at him. He dodged, stepped backward, and too late saw a slow, easy curve bend gracefully in the air and float across the center of the plate and heard Mr. Munson say, "Batter out." The game was over.

Larry rushed and threw his arms around Katsura, and the Shasta View team danced a war dance of victory. They stopped the exhibition to give three cheers for their visitors, and in the midst of the cheers Larry glanced across the diamond just in time to

see the big man in the buckboard lash his horses viciously with the whip. He stood gazing after the buckboard until the golden-haired girl disappeared in a cloud of dust.

CHAPTER XVIII

A Challenge and a Traitor

THE victory of the Shasta View boys over their rivals from the Rogue River ranch pleased Major Lawrence as much as anything the boys could have done and his delight resulted in unexpected complications. The Major had driven into Pearton the day after the game between the ranch teams and had informed all his friends of the victory of Shasta View, not forgetting to mention the unfair tactics by which the Baldwin forces had attempted to win.

Among his old friends was the editor of the weekly paper in the village and to him Major Lawrence gave a vivid account of the events of the preceding afternoon. His account of the game, it is to be feared, was rather more glowing than accurate as the Major never had attempted to master the intricacies of the national pastime. So enthu-

siastic did he become that he concluded his narrative by informing the editor that he intended to offer a handsome gold cup to the Shasta View team on condition that it defend the cup against all teams in the county, and that any team in the county might challenge for the trophy, provided it was composed of players under eighteen years of age.

Major Lawrence did not understand that he was making conditions that were extremely unfair to Shasta View. In his enthusiasm he forgot that, in awarding the cup as the permanent property of any team that beat Shasta View, he was compelling his own boys to win every game in order to hold the trophy, as there was no provision for a return challenge.

The teams in the county were few and scattered, but the news of Major Lawrence's offer, which appeared in the Pearton *Express*, created fresh interest in baseball and started boys on every ranch, in every village and community, to organizing teams with the hope of capturing the trophy.

The serious danger that confronted the Shasta View team was from the boys of the

town. There were a number of good players in Pearton and at various times the town had organized fairly good teams, which usually were disbanded after a few games, or disrupted by lack of discipline and interest. It seemed unreasonable to believe that in a community of nearly two thousand inhabitants there would be a sufficient number of boys who were good players to win over the team that Larry Kirkland had chosen from the thirty-eight boys of the ranch. With these three hundred or more boys eligible to play under the conditions, Pearton felt confident that it could organize a team that would lower the colors of Larry's club and put an abrupt end to the harmless boasting of Major Lawrence. The Major was one of the most popular and perhaps the best-liked man in the district, but to turn a joke on him was one of the dearest conceits of many of the men who ranked themselves his best friends.

The evening after the Major issued his sweeping challenge on behalf of his boys and even before the newspaper was issued, Walter Thorton, son of the leading merchant in Pearton, commenced the work of organizing

the team. He called together all the boys he could find who had played on the High School or any of the town teams, informed them of the Major's challenge, and ordered all who wanted to play to report for practice on the schoolhouse grounds the following afternoon. Thorton laid his plans cunningly. He did not want his team to play the Shasta Views until his players had practiced together and learned something of teamwork, so he delayed making any challenge for the cup and set about organizing and training as strong a ball club as he could get together.

The first challenge that came in response to the Major's defy was from Harry Baldwin on behalf of Rogue River ranch. As an additional incentive he offered to play for a "side bet of \$250." Instead of accepting the conditions laid down by the Major for the express purpose of preventing a repetition of the importing of players and bringing in older boys, Harry insisted that Rogue River ranch be permitted to send the same team that it had sent before, and, further, he impudently claimed that, as the first game was played at Shasta View the challenge game

should be played at Rogue River ranch, and that he should be permitted to select the umpire.

Larry, after reading the letter to Major Lawrence, replied that Shasta View did not play for money or engage in gambling, and that Rogue River must abide by the conditions laid down in order to have its challenge received.

Harry Baldwin did not reply to the letter, but wherever he went, he circulated the report that Shasta View was afraid to play his team and had refused his challenge for the cup.

Larry and his team, anticipating an early challenge from the Pearton club, worked harder than ever at practicing. By steady practice Katsura improved rapidly in his pitching, and within a fortnight Larry knew him to be a better pitcher even than Benny Arnett had been, and one more dependable in emergencies. When a fortnight passed without a challenge from the town team, Larry relaxed his efforts. He was rather disappointed, as he had expected Major Lawrence's challenge to bring instant reply, yet

no one seemed willing to try for the cup. Several teams had started preparations with great enthusiasm, and had become discouraged after brief periods of playing, and eventually disbanded without challenging.

Delta ranch, which was thirty miles away and in the edge of the county, challenged and its team came down with a great flourish to claim the trophy, but the game proved a farce, and Shasta View won almost without an effort by a score of 19 to 3.

That result discouraged some of the other ranch teams, and besides the busiest season of the year was at hand, and many of the boys were unable to find time to practice. August dragged to an end and September came. The first week passed and the Shasta View team was becoming less and less enthusiastic. They practiced three times a week, but with no prospect of a game they ceased even that.

One afternoon, when they had gathered to practice, Larry made a proposal which pleased the boys immensely. He had heard Major Lawrence complain that much of the fruit was ripening rapidly and that there was

a shortage of men to pick and pack. He proposed that instead of practicing they go as a body and volunteer to assist in the harvesting of the fruit crop.

The offer pleased the foremen almost as much as it did Major Lawrence. The continued hot weather was bringing the fruit to full perfection earlier than usual, and all hands and all extra help was needed. The volunteer army of small boys, light, agile and quick, proved a boon, as they could work faster and better on the light ladders than the men could.

One day Chun Moi, who had left his house duties to help with the press of work outside, was sent to town early in the morning to bring out a wagon load of packing boxes. He returned to the ranch in a high state of excitement, and was chattering a mixture of Chinese and Pidgin English when he raced into the orchard where the boys were at work. He found Larry Kirkland perched on the top of a high picking ladder, munching a luscious pear that was too ripe for packing but perfect for present consumption.

At sight of Chun's excitement Larry

dropped from the ladder and squatting with Chun on the grass, strove to understand his excited jabber which had taken the place of his usually too correct and stilted English. The news he had to impart sent Larry flying from tree to tree to summon all members of the Shasta View team to a meeting at the clum rooms at seven that evening.

Every boy on the two teams knew that something had happened and not one of the players was missing when the meeting hour arrived. The club room had been pressed into service by the packers during the rush to get the ripening fruit boxed, and empty packing boxes filled much of the floor space. The boys gathered in a circle, sitting upon the boxes and waiting anxiously for Larry to tell them the reason for the hasty summons. It was evident that Larry was worried and excited when he seated himself on a pile of boxes and without waiting for any parliamentary introductions, asked:

"Fellows, do any of you know where Benny Arnett has been for the last two weeks?"

"He's got a job in town, working in the

box factory," said Phillips, one of the subs. "His paw wanted him to go to work here, but he quarreled and left home."

"He told one of the fellows Miss Lawrence gave him money," volunteered another boy.

"I haven't seen him since the day we beat the Rogues," said Larry. "I thought he was still here. Chun found out to-day that Benny is pitcher for the town team."

A startled silence, followed by a murmur of surprise, indignation and doubt, followed the announcement. There were angry threats and excited clamor. It was clear the boys regarded Benny Arnett as a traitor to the team and to the ranch.

"That isn't the worst," said Larry, when the noise had subsided so that he could be heard. "The fact is, fellows, we're in a bad fix. We have been loafing and getting out of condition and practice, and the town team has been practicing all the time, with Benny pitching. Besides that they have Lucas, and Wallace, and Harry Baldwin from the Rogue River team. Wallace is over eighteen, so I guess he won't play and they needed a pitcher. Harry Baldwin is playing with

them, and they say his dad has given him all the money he wants to get a team that will beat us.

"Chun went in this morning and heard about it. He slipped over to the school grounds and watched them practicing, and heard them telling what they are going to do to us. They have been letting us think they were not going to challenge, so we wouldn't practice. Benny saw Chun as he was leaving the grounds and now that they know we know what they are up to I expect they will challenge us right away."

"What are you going to do?" asked Manuelo. "We've got to keep on working or the fruit will rot, and we can't play them without practice."

"That's what worries me," replied Larry. "I've thought of a plan that may fool them if you boys are willing to do it."

A murmur of eager assent testified that the boys were ready for anything he had to propose.

"It's this way," said the young manager. "We want them to keep on thinking we are not practicing. If they are getting word of

what we are doing it is from some of the teamsters who are hauling fruit to town. Let's get up at four-thirty every morning and practice an hour. Then we can go to work as usual and they will think we are not practicing and may delay challenging us and give us more time. After supper every evening Katty and Sammy and I will practice, so Katty will be in shape to pitch."

"I have been practicing every day," said Katsura proudly. "I am better than ever and have more speed."

"How have you managed it?" asked Larry curiously.

"I throw the bad apples at trees," replied the little brown boy seriously. "Of ten apples I can hit a tree trunk nine times, but the curve I cannot pitch well, because the apples are slippery."

A laugh greeted the explanation and the boys voted unanimously that they practice each morning, starting not later than five o'clock. For four days they worked hard for more than an hour each morning, and as they found their skill increased, and saw Katsura's improvement their confidence re-

turned. In the evenings Larry and Katsura, and sometimes Sammy Blantin, practiced until it grew too late to see the ball.

On the Tuesday evening after Chun's discovery of the Pearton boys' plans, the expected happened. The Shasta View team received a formal challenge from the Pearton Athletic Club to play for possession of the Shasta View cup on the following Saturday afternoon.

Larry smiled as he read the note. The Major had stated that challenges must be received not later than the Tuesday before the Saturday on which the game was to be played, and Pearton had waited to the last minute. Larry was happy. At least the foe had not caught him asleep.

CHAPTER XIX

For the Honor of the Ranch

CARRIAGES and wagons were coming into Shasta View ranch from every road. Men on horseback raced and galloped along in clouds of dust. Men from the mountains and mines, guides from the Crater Lake reservation, forest rangers from the reservation, Indians from the Siskiyou, cowboys, Mexicans, ranchers, and herds of boys and girls from the neighboring ranches came in groups. Before noon the townspeople, in every kind of conveyance and on horseback were arriving at the ranch in an unbroken procession and turning into the long oleander avenue.

On the wide piazza Major Lawrence was extending welcome to all, calling greetings to those who drove past to the ball field, and greeting his closer friends who stopped at the steps. Tables were ranged all around the wide piazza and soft-footed brown and

yellow boys brought light refreshments and tall glasses of iced drinks.

The day was a perfect one for baseball. The cool breeze that brought the tingle of the frosts of the high Sierra tempered the heat of the unclouded sun. A few fleecy clouds floated lazily out from the mountain tops as if intending to obscure the sun, but either were driven in retreat before his rays, or dissipated before they reached the valley. Shasta towered in glittering whiteness over the scene.

The earlier fruit harvest had been completed late Friday afternoon, and the final "rush" load of packing cases had been sent into town early that morning. Major Lawrence, well pleased with the work of his men and boys in preventing loss on the early crop, had declared a half-holiday for all workers on the ranch as a reward for their extra labor of the week in order that they might have the opportunity of witnessing the crucial struggle of the year.

The great pasture in which the playing field was laid out presented a scene rivaling the bustle of a county fair. White lines had

been chalked upon the ground as boundaries, past which the spectators should not advance, and along these the vehicles were lined broadside, many of them with boards laid across the beds, forming seats. Rows of vehicles extended far out along the line in both right and left fields. Some ingenious ranch boy had thought to utilize the huge heaps of packing boxes, and in the shade of the orchard trees hundreds of these boxes had been placed to afford comfortable seats for the swarms of pedestrians who had walked, some of them many miles, through orchards and fields to witness the contest. At noon jolly picnic parties were in progress on the grass along the edge of the orchard, in fact, in scores of shady places. The Major could not entertain all, but dozens lunched on the porches and in the great hallway and living-room of the bungalow.

Until the arrival of the large partisan delegation of Pearton men and boys there was no division of forces or outbreak of rivalry. The ranchers, the mountaineers, and country people were, for the most part, staunch supporters of Major Lawrence and of anything for

which he stood sponsor. The delegation of Indians, more than two dozen squaws and braves, who had come down from the mountains to watch Snow Eagle, honored the occasion by wearing their brightest blankets and feathers and Snow Eagle himself had adorned his black hair with the one eagle feather he was entitled to wear as the son of a chief.

The game was to start at two-thirty in order to permit the townspeople to return home in time for supper, and it was one o'clock before the big wagonette, gaily decorated and drawn by four horses, came rapidly up the avenue, whirled with a great flourish to the vacant place in front of the backstop to permit the Pearton Athletes to alight. They had preferred eating an early luncheon in town and to make an effective entry had waited until the crowd was assembled. Their appearance was the signal for an outburst of applause. They made a brave appearance in their new uniforms, of snowy white, with a cardinal red "P" sewn to the breast of the shirts, and cardinal stockings.

The Shasta View boys had not appeared

on the field when the challengers arrived on the scene of the contest, but from the windows of their club house they watched the coming of the Pearton team. Larry Kirkland had been giving them final instructions and reading to them a letter that had come from Krag the preceding day, a letter filled with advice as to what to do in such a game as the one at hand.

"Gee, dem folkses looks big!" exclaimed little Burton as the boys crowded to the window to see the town team.

"Biggah dey am, de hahder dey fall," replied Sammy Blantin, who never was discouraged.

"See!" exclaimed Nakyami scornfully, "That's Benny. See him parade like a peacock."

"We beat him—wait, wait," said Chun, showing his excitement by his speech. "Him no good. Him get mad; we win."

"Chun is right," laughed Larry. "Let's all pretend we are glad he is going to pitch. Be polite and tell him how glad we are he is their pitcher instead of ours, only don't get mad; laugh at anything he says."

"I'd rather have him pitching than to have Wallace, anyhow," remarked Manuelo, and there was a general laugh, for Wallace had struck Manuelo out three times during the game against the Rogue River ranch team.

"All ready, fellows?" asked Larry quietly. "Keep together. Let's run out onto the field in a line and run right to our positions. The crowd cheered them and we don't want them to think they are the only ones in this game."

A moment later the little band of players, the first team in a line in front, the second team in a line following them, trotted down the lane, running in step. They swung out onto the field from the catcher's position and the majority of the spectators did not see them until they were coming, in company front, straight out from the backstop, looking very serious and businesslike.

Running smartly at the finish, they came to the plate and suddenly broke ranks and scattered quickly to their positions, while the Scrubs ran to the bench, bearing the sweaters, coats and implements of the game.

The entry of the Shasta View boys upon the scene of the contest was effective, and the

scattering of cheers turned into an outburst of real enthusiasm. The practice of the town boys had been easy, consisting of tossing the ball around and fielding in haphazard style, and contrasted with the sharp, businesslike manner of the Shasta boys it did not show well. There was a dash and effectiveness about the infield work, especially, of Larry's nondescript team, that earned it the sympathy of many spectators, and there was little doubt but that the large majority of spectators favored them. They appeared small and young in comparison with the town boys and a crowd instinctively favors the smaller players. Their fielding showed the effects of the summer of steady, conscientious practice and Larry felt that, even if defeated, his efforts had not been wasted.

Benny Arnett, resplendent in his new uniform and cardinal sweater, which set off his dark complexion admirably, strutted around in sneering defiance. Some of the ranch boys, not of the team, had jeered him and reproached him as being a turncoat and a traitor to the ranch. He was angry and resentful as Larry Kirkland ran down to third

base and whirled into position to field. Benny walked down the line toward him, an ugly sneer on his face. Larry scooped a fast grounder and, glancing up, saw Benny approaching. He threw the ball and called cheerfully, so that the spectators could hear:

"Hello, Benny; we're glad to see you're going to pitch against us."

Benny, who had been expecting an angry reproach and had been prepared to reply in kind, was taken aback. The laugh that ran through the crowd caused him to flush with rage.

"Yes, instead of for us," called Manueto from second base.

The scorn of the words, and from one of his mother's blood, stung Benny, and with an ugly oath he returned to the bench and remained there, sullen and sulking.

After ten minutes of fast work the Shasta View boys yielded the field to their rivals. Then they had their first opportunity of seeing the Pearton Athletes in action. Compared with his own players Larry thought the town boys seemed giants, and an uneasy sense of unfairness stirred him. He saw

Lucas, the preparatory school boy, who had been imported to help Rogue River, playing in the out field. Surely he was more than eighteen! Harry Baldwin was at second base. McSwigan, son of the section foreman on the railroad, was old enough to do a man's work in the railway yards, but was playing first base. Sutphen, the banker's boy, who had been away at school one year, was at third, a big, strong boy about eighteen years old. The catcher, a square built, active chap, was a stranger and several of the others were not known to the ranch boys.

It was evident that Thorton had recruited from all the surrounding district in his effort to get a winning club, and Larry was suspicious that he had imported players, perhaps from Medford or Salem.

Larry was standing near the line when the Pearton team concluded their practice. Harry Baldwin walked close to him and said:

"Well, you have to play against me anyhow, even if you were afraid of my team."

"I was wishing the others were all like you, and we'd win sure," said Larry scorn-

fully. "I believe half your players are over eighteen."

"You're looking for a chance to make excuses before you start," sneered Harry.

"We will not need any excuses," said Larry; "we're going to win."

He looked across to where Major Lawrence was exhibiting the cup to a group of admiring spectators. It was of gold, the figure of a boy catching a ball, molded in gold and enamels on the side, and the top, of silver and gold, was the crater of Shasta. Larry glanced up from the cup and saw the little girl with the golden hair, standing in the buckboard, gazing over the heads of the spectators at the cup, while the big man who had been with her at the other game, leaned over to speak to a swaggering, flashily dressed man who stood at the wheel of the vehicle. Larry's eyes met those of the girl, and she flushed hotly and looked the other way quickly.

An argument was going on when Larry walked toward the home plate. Walter Thorton, captain of the visiting team, was talking and Mr. Munson was listening.

"Larry," called Mr. Munson, "Pearton insists upon having two umpires. Captain Thorton says you chose me and they want to name a man to umpire with me, one to be behind the bat one inning and then on the bases the next.

"Do you mean to say you think Mr. Munson isn't honest?" demanded Larry angrily.

"No, we don't think that," replied Thorton, "but he's your umpire and we want one, too."

"Well, if Mr. Munson doesn't care"——hesitated Larry, glancing at Mr. Munson to learn his wishes. "Who is your man?"

"Our boys want Mr. Gregg," Thorton replied, averting his eyes.

"Gregg?" exclaimed Mr. Munson in surprise.

"Gregg?" repeated Larry. "Why, isn't he the fellow who runs the saloon and pool room? Is he all right?"

"He used to be a ball player," said Thorton. "He has always umpired the games for the town team and we want him."

"I think you should have notified Shasta

View sooner," said Mr. Munson. "However, it is for Captain Kirkland to decide."

"All we want is fair play," said Larry.

"Very well—Thorton, call your man."

Thorton motioned with his hand, and Larry had the second surprise when he saw the tough-looking man he had seen talking to Barney Baldwin toss his coat into the buckboard and come out onto the field.

"Shall I toss?" asked Mr. Munson.

"Yes," from both captains.

"You call, Thorton."

The coin spun in the air.

"Heads," called Thorton.

All four stooped to see which side of the coin was upturned.

CHAPTER XX

Defending the Cup

THE coin had fallen with the eagle upward.

"Hurrah, fellows!" cried Larry; "we win the toss."

The Shasta View boys raced to their positions in the field with the crowd applauding. Mr. Munson announced the batteries, the ranchers cheering Katsura, while cries of "Banzai" went up from the Nipponese workers gathered to watch their countrymen play. The town delegation responded by a wild outburst of applause as Arnett and Brannigan were named as the battery, although a few hisses greeted Benny's name.

"Pitch carefully, Katty," said Larry in a low tone to his little pitcher. "Keep the ball close to them and the curve low and out until you find out what they will hit at. Get as much speed on the fast one as you can every time, and slow up the slow curve. After a

couple of innings we can tell what they can hit."

He handed the ball that Mr. Munson had tossed out to Katsura and ran back to his place. Ennis, the visitor's shortstop, was coming to bat.

"I know that fellow," exclaimed Phillips, one of Shasta's substitutes on the bench. "He's from down at Medford. He and that big catcher, Brannigan, played with Medford last summer."

Ennis evidently expected to have an easy time hitting little Katsura's pitching, for he smiled at the little fellow, and swung wickedly at a slow twister, and went out on an easy boulder straight to Hanson. Lucas, the prep school boy who had played with the Rogue River team, trotted to the bat.

"He's easy, fellows!" yelled Harry Baldwin, coaching at first base. "Come on, Luke, and hit it to the center field fence."

As the center field fence was two miles away, if there was one, the sally brought a laugh from the town contingent, that stopped suddenly as Lucas popped an easy fly to Larry, and the ridicule ceased abruptly when

Dominick struck out and the Shasta View supporters roared their applause.

The Pearton team did not look as formidable as it had done. The smaller and younger boys had retired them with ease, and the ranch team ran in from the field, safe from stage fright or sudden defeat, eager to attack. Larry pleaded with his players to wait, to make Benny pitch hard all the time. He hoped Benny would show his old fault of wildness, but the handsome, dark-skinned fellow, sneering superciliously, kept shooting his fast curve across the plate again and again. Nakyami struck out. Snow Eagle, obedient to orders, stood unflinching as close to the plate as permissible, and compelled Benny to pitch seven balls before he finally fouled out to Brannigan.

"Good waiting!" cried Larry. "Wait him out. He'll throw away his own game."

Benny sneered at him and pitched angrily, until he had pitched three balls and two strikes to Hanson. Then he settled and forced Hanson to hit and he flied out.

Thorton led off the second inning and hit the first ball to left center field for two bases.

Instead of sacrificing, McSwigan hit the first ball, and flied out to Snow Eagle. Sutphen hit the ball back at Katsura so fiercely that the ball broke through his hands and before he could pounce upon it Thorton was on third and Sutphen safe on first. The situation looked bad for Shasta View and Larry edged closer to the plate. He was afraid to call the shortstop and second baseman nearer, but he planned to try to shut Thorton off from the plate if the ball came his direction. Baldwin hit the ball hard, and drove it straight at Larry, who dived at it and scooped it on the first bound. He knew he could cut Thorton off from the plate, but that would be only one out and the danger would not be passed. Like a flash he saw that Sutphen had hesitated, not knowing whether the ball had been caught on the fly or the bounce, and crying "Manuelo," he threw the ball to second base. The agile little Spaniard met the ball at the base, caught it and pivoting like a flash, hurled it to first, completing a double play that ended the inning and set the Shasta View supporters wild with enthusiasm.

Larry's plan of battle was to worry Benny Arnett. He believed that, sooner or later, Benny would lose his temper and his control of the ball at the same time, and again he ordered his men not to hit until compelled to do so. He set the example for them by standing at the plate, refusing to strike at the ball at all, until three balls and two strikes had been called, and then he fouled two more pitched balls before he finally flied out. Chun, smaller and more tricky at bat, grimaced, danced and dodged around in his position until he was rewarded by a base on balls, and he promptly stole second base, only to be left there as the next two batters were helpless before Benny's sweeping curve and the inning ended without a score.

Larry had been watching Katsura closely. It was evident that the faithful practice had brought its results and that Katsura was using his brain as well as his arm. He was giving the signals to Sammy instead of taking them. Katsura was pitching with his full body swing, the movement used by the warriors of the old Shoguns in throwing spears. It was a motion each boy of the old

Japan had to learn since it enabled them, even though much lighter, to throw their weapons as far as the heavier and stronger foemen could. Katsura had adapted the spear-throwing movement to baseball and by constant practice had mastered the trick of pitching his slow ball with the same motion he used in pitching his fast ball. His pitching was an odd result of a combination of the teaching of old Japan and that of Krag, the famous pitcher of the Giants.

Pearton had ceased to jibe at Katsura, and when, at the end of the third inning, he struck out Benny Arnett, they began to look serious.

Benny was furious at being struck out, and he was disturbed and resentful when he went to his position.

"Now's the time to get runs, fellows," whispered Larry on the bench. "He'll think we're going to wait. Don't wait at all; hit the first ball while he's mad. He's so mad he won't think."

Benny, in his anger, called some insulting remark to some of the Shasta View players

as they came from the field and said something about "niggers and yellow devils."

Sammy Blantin was coming to the plate to bat when he heard the remark.

"I'd a heap rather be yaller er black in de skin dan in de heart," he cried.

The retort drew a burst of laughter from those nearest the base lines and Benny, flaring into a rage, hurled the ball viciously and without skill. The ball struck Sammy on the head. He fell as if dead, and a cry of alarm and anger ran through the crowd, who thought Benny had hit the Shasta View catcher purposely. The cry changed to a burst of laughter when Sammy, springing to his feet and running to first base, shouted:

"You kain't hurt me hittin' me dar. Hit me on de shin."

Katsura, a weak batter, but clever bunter, pushed the first ball pitched toward third base and was safe when Benny fumbled the ball. Nakyami rolled the ball a little way toward first base and was across the bag before either Benny or the first baseman could decide which should field it.

The Pearton team was in panic. The

players were quarreling, blaming each other and angrily ordering Benny to pitch. Larry, eager to force the advantage, told Snow Eagle to hit the first ball, and as it was a bad ball, he fouled out.

Larry realized he had blundered in issuing such orders to a player who obeyed unquestioningly and said to Hanson: "Hit it hard, but make him pitch you a good one."

The crowd was in a furore of excitement, but Hanson was cool and seemingly unconcerned. Benny pitched one wide curve, which was a ball, and Hanson, without a smile, said:

"Gee, Banny, Ay ban glad you pitch."

Hanson finally had remembered the orders Larry had given in the early afternoon, but the remark proved timely, as Benny, flushed with anger, threw a fast ball, which Hanson drove to left for a long single that scored two runners.

At that point the Pearton players managed to stop the rally by means of two difficult catches, and this gave Benny a chance to calm himself and steady down.

Katsura was pitching beautifully when

Shasta View went back to the field. His fast ball was always close to the handles of the bats, or in close to the knees of the batters. His slow curve looked easy, but always seemed to hit the top or bottom of the bat. The visitors hit the ball, but could not hit it hard, retiring on easy flies and slow bounders. The fourth and fifth innings rushed past, and the sixth started with the score still 2 to 0 in favor of Shasta View.

Just as the sixth inning started, Larry saw Gregg, the town umpire, look toward the buckboard in which Barney Baldwin was sitting, and saw some signal pass between the men. It was Gregg's turn to umpire behind the bat and call the balls and strikes. He nodded his head affirmatively as if in response to the signal. The inning started with big McSwigan at bat and he hit the first ball pitched far out and Snow Eagle caught it close to the carriages, causing his redskin admirers to stir proudly in their blankets, while the whites cheered him vehemently. Sutphen held a whispered consultation with Harry Baldwin before batting. Katsura sent his fast ball across the inner corner of

the plate, and Gregg called it a ball. The next seemed to go over the center of the plate, and it, too, was called a ball. The usually good-natured Sammy Blantin held the ball and ran down toward third base.

"Mistah Larry," he said; "Mistah Larry, dat man tryin' to rob us-alls. He tell dat batter not ter hit an' den he call all de strikes balls."

"Don't kick," ordered Larry sharply. "Be game. Play the game."

The next ball whizzed through the center of the plate and again Gregg called "Ball." Katsura looked puzzled and turned to Larry as if seeking advice or instructions. Larry ran over to the little pitcher. He felt certain now that Gregg was deliberately striving to force Pearton to win, and in a flash he recalled the signals that had passed between Baldwin and the umpire, and of mysterious conferences between the elder Baldwin and his son and between the son and the other players. Larry wondered what Krag would do in such an emergency. Krag had written to him not to oppose the umpires, and that kicking on decisions was useless. He looked

at Mr. Munson, whose face revealed annoyance and anger, as he moved down toward second base as if to make certain that he could not have been mistaken.

"Pitch every ball straight over the plate," said Larry to Katsura. "They won't hit, and you must make him call them."

The next ball was a trifle wide, but Gregg called it a strike, as if striving to avert suspicion, and the next one, straight over the plate, he called a ball, and the batter trotted to first base.

Harry Baldwin, who had been coaching noisily, ran to the bat. He stood motionless, not attempting to hit at any ball, and drew a base. Some of the spectators commenced to mutter, and a few, near third base, who had heard Sammy's complaint against the umpire, were growing angry and uttering threats. When Gregg gave Brophy a base on balls, three of which went over the plate, the muttering grew to an angry protest. Two or three big cowboys got up from the ground and walked toward the plate. Gregg evidently had not calculated upon any hostile moves, and seeming frightened, he called two

strikes on Benny Arnett. Benny, angered, turned and said:

"You said you'd call them"——

He suddenly realized what he was saying, or was warned by Gregg's furious glance. An outburst of indignation arose near the plate among those who overheard the remark, and spread through the throng. The cowboys moved a bit closer to the umpire, and someone in the crowd cried a warning to him to give Shasta View a square deal. The pool-room man turned pale. The threatened demonstration frightened Benny Arnett more than it did the umpire. The next ball pitched was high and wide, but he hit at it blindly and drove a line fly straight into the hands of Hanson, who stepped back to first base before the runner could return, and a shout of joy greeted the double play that ended the inning and undid all the effects of Gregg's unfairness.

The umpires changed positions and as Gregg walked out near first base he was greeted with a volley of hisses that revealed to him the danger of tampering with the temper of that crowd. Many of the townspeople

who believed him unfair, turned against him. The seventh inning passed without incident and the crowd seemed to have forgotten the anger that marked the sixth.

In the eighth inning Gregg resumed his position behind the bat. His boldness had given way to cunning, and he managed to award two bases on balls without arousing the ire of the spectators beyond a few hisses and threats. His miscalling of balls and strikes compelled Katsura to pitch straight balls most of the time and with two runners on bases McSwigan drove a long hit over Finnerty's head that sent home two runners and tied the score. There Katsura held them, although two other runners were on the bases when the inning ended.

Shasta View was helpless in their eighth, as Benny, his courage revived, pitched magnificently. Nor could Pearton make headway against Katsura in the ninth, with Mr. Munson umpiring behind the bat.

Larry felt that they must win in their half of the ninth, as he was convinced the team could not stand before Gregg's ball and strike decisions if that individual umpired behind

the bat in the tenth. He exhorted his players to make a run, just one. Snow Eagle, too anxious to hit, struck out. Hanson hit a fierce bouncer, but McSwigan stopped the ball and recovered it in time to beat the slow-footed Swede to first.

Larry Kirkland faced Benny Arnett with two out. The first ball was fast and barely missed hitting him.

"What's the matter, Benny?" he called as he dodged. "Are you afraid to pitch one where I can hit it?"

The taunt angered Benny and another ball whizzed past his head. Benny was in a rage, and Larry, tantalizing him, dodging balls thrown viciously, but without skill, drew a base on balls.

"Watch me," cried Benny, "I'm going to steal on the first ball."

As the first ball was pitched Larry started away from first base at top speed. Brannigan sprang into position to throw and Larry, stopping suddenly, took a step back toward first base, and laughed. Brannigan, convinced that Larry was afraid to try to steal, tossed the ball slowly back to Benny, and, even as

he was throwing Larry had leaped into full stride and was racing for second base. Benny caught the ball, whirled and threw. As Larry slid he felt the second baseman leap into the air. He knew Benny's throw had gone high, and leaping to his feet he sprinted for third. Chun, on the third-base line, was screaming in gibberish for him to come on. The one idea in Larry's mind was to follow Krag's advice and make the other team throw the ball. One fleeting glance backward showed him the center fielder throwing the ball toward third base. He knew he could beat the ball to third, and, without an instant's hesitation or the loss of a step, he turned third and dashed for the plate. He knew that to stop probably meant to be left on bases while to go on meant a chance that someone would throw wild or some fielder would muff the ball.

The crowd was breaking into a tumult of excitement. As Larry raced he saw the lines of spectators bulge and sway, as if each spectator wanted to run for him. His heart was thumping and his legs seemed dragging weights as he threw every effort into his



MAJOR LAWRENCE PUT HIS ARM AROUND LARRY

dash. He saw Brannigan crouching right in front of the plate, and as he saw Brannigan stretch his hands to catch the ball he hurled his body through the air and dived straight at the catcher.

There was a shock of body against body. Larry felt a numbing pain as Brannigan's spikes bit into his hand and he heard Mr. Munson shout "Safe."

When Larry realized what was going on, Mr. Munson was supporting him, a swarm of Shasta View adherents were striving to pat him on the back. Then Major Lawrence, bearing the cup, pushed forward to present it to him, as captain of the winning team, and seeing the blood, he dropped the cup, and springing forward, put his arm around Larry and supported him as they passed through the cheering crowd to the club house.

CHAPTER XXI

The End of the Season

TWENTY-FOUR boys—all boys, although one of them was past sixty years of age and one forty, had gathered for the dinner given by Major Lawrence in honor of the triumphant season of the Shasta View ranch team.

Every boy of Shasta View ranch who had played with the team, or worked, hoping to get a regular position on it, was there, with the exception of Benny Arnett. Benny had fared ill in his venture. His exposé of the plot of Gregg, the saloon man, and the Baldwins in their attempt to rob the Shasta View team of the game for the cup had made him unpopular with the town boys. He had returned home to the ranch for a brief period, and made the blunder of striving to curry favor by confessing the details of the plot by which the Pearton Athletes were to win. Only four of the Pearton players knew of it

and Barney Baldwin had arranged the details with Gregg, the saloon man.

Benny's admission that he knew about the dishonest scheme was interesting to the Shasta View boys, but their scorn for him was only deepened by it. After a week or more, during which the majority of the boys refused to speak to him, Benny departed for Portland after wheedling money from Miss Lawrence, announcing that he intended to become a professional baseball player the following spring.

Major Lawrence's dinner to the club was partly to celebrate the close of the season and partly as the farewell of Larry Kirkland to his players. Larry, in spite of his dislike for his tutor, had made excellent progress in his studies, and it had been arranged that he should enter a preparatory school near San Francisco. Larry had demurred at first, the life of the ranch and the associations formed during the summer had become dear to him, and he dreaded going among strangers again. But on that point Major Lawrence remained firm. He insisted that the ranch school did not afford enough advantages and

that two years at the preparatory school would be necessary before Larry would be able to enter college.

"You must have a college career," he almost shouted, when Larry begged to be permitted to remain at the ranch for the winter. "Confound it, boy, you don't know what it means. No one does excepting a fellow who has missed it. My family planned to send me to college, and I was as stubborn and bull-headed as you are. I've regretted it all my life. It's the one thing I do regret."

"How did you get out of it?" inquired Larry, hoping for a hint that would enable him to win the argument.

"I ran away and came West," the Major stormed.

"But you got rich, and prospered, and had a grand time," argued Larry.

"Yes, I got rich, boy," the Major replied, his manner softening. "I got rich, but I missed an education. I'm an ignorant old man, and I never read a book, or write a letter, or talk to a man of education that I don't feel it, even if he fails to notice it. I got rich,

but I'd probably have gotten rich anyhow, and sooner."

Larry had surrendered, and the dinner now in progress was part of the reward for that surrender. The boys had eaten, and stamped their feet and cheered as the Major told them how proud he was of the team. He pointed to the great loving cup, standing in the center of the table, and said that never again should that cup be risked in any game, but that the next year, when Larry came home from school, he hoped they would have an even better club to defend the cup he would offer.

Mr. Munson, at Larry's request, read the letter that "Gatling" Krag, the famous pitcher of the Giants, had written in reply to Larry's letter giving details of the game against Pearton.

"I'm certainly proud of you," Krag had written. "When I get to be a major league manager I'm going to sign every one of you.

"I'm proud of you, and I read the letter to all the fellows on our team and told them if we could have the same spirit on our club you got on yours we'd have won the pennant in-

stead of finishing second. The thing that makes me prouder than ever of you fellows is that you took the chance of losing rather than to sacrifice the principle of the thing. That's the idea; if you're right, stick to it and you'll feel just as much winners in eighth place as in first. If you know you are wrong, and have won by wrongdoing, first place won't make you forget that you cheated.

"Our team is coming to the Coast next spring and if you are at school near San Francisco we'll see you."

The letter from the famous pitcher was greeted by a round of cheers. Mr. Munson paused and then read:

"P.S.—Tell that little brown pitcher of yours that I'm trying his javelin throw. My arm has been weak this fall, and that swing of his was just what I needed to get speed and save the arm."

A roar of applause greeted that announcement. Katsura beamed with pride and joy, but when he was called upon to make a speech he slid down in his chair until in danger of sliding under the table, and all the

boys roared with laughter over his embarrassment.

Mr. Munson, who was enjoying the dinner quite as much as any of the boys were, and acting as if no older, shouted "Speech, speech," and the boys caught up the cry. Larry, with much embarrassment, discovered that they were calling for him.

"I tank he rattled," remarked Hanson as Larry, feeling as if his arms and legs did not fit him, rose to his feet and clutched at the table. It was one thing to sit on a packing box and talk to the boys before a game, and quite another to be expected to make a regular speech. Larry wanted to tell them how proud he was, and how glad he was to have come among them, and how much he appreciated their work and their faithfulness to practice. His heart was full. But what he said was:

"Fellows, and Uncle Jim and Mr. Munson—I thank you and—and—well, all I can say is, I thank you. I wanted to say something, but I've forgotten it."

"Sure, he ban rattle bad," remarked Hanson.

Larry turned red and choked.

"Good, good, go on," called Mr. Munson.

"Fellows," Larry bravely strove to continue. "Fellows, I thank you. Oh, pshaw, I can't think of anything excepting that I'm going away."

He sat down, confused, with the tears ready to start. Mr. Munson sprang to his feet.

"Three cheers for the captain of the Shasta View team," he cried.

Boys sprang to their feet, to their chairs, and waving their napkins shouted the cheers.

"And three for the team," cried Mr. Munson.

The cheering proceeded more loudly than ever.

"And three for Major Lawrence," cried Mr. Munson.

"No—no, you sha'n't," stormed the Major. "I won't have it, I tell you. You'll drive Sairy crazy."

But in spite of him the boys cheered until it seemed the rafters of the bungalow shook.

THE END





